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A  
HISTORY OF MUSIC  
IN ENGLAND

BY

ERNEST WALKER

M.A., D.Mus.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to sketch the main features of English music from its earliest artistic manifestations to the close of the nineteenth century. I use the term 'English' in default of any other that is more exactly comprehensive; but the chapter on folk-music will be found to contain references to the melodies of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, as well as to those of England itself. And, further, I have taken 'English music' to include 'music made in England', not solely 'music composed by Englishmen'; to adopt the latter signification alone would, I thought, in dealing with a country where foreign influences have played a large part, have unduly limited the scope of the book, and I have in fact, for practical purposes, considered as Englishmen those composers who, though of foreign blood, have made England their home and have produced for an English public all the works by which their name survives. Of these the greatest is of course Handel, who, as a naturalized Englishman who spent over forty-five years of his life in this country, has justly won a place in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; I have disregarded the few works he wrote for Italian and German audiences, but it seemed impossible to avoid treatment of the others, especially as their influence here has been so colossal.

I have thought it best to concern myself primarily with the actual music, and only secondarily with biographical minutiae and general antiquarian research, which, in a work of larger dimensions, would naturally have received closer attention than they do here; it seemed to me that a book of this size demanded a sort of treatment which left little room for details more suited to a biographical dictionary, a history of social customs, or the publications of an archaeological society. It is true that at present considerable research among MSS. and rare printed books is still indispensable for the proper understanding of the artistic position of some of

our greatest men (and, after all, scoring from part-books is a very fascinating if somewhat tedious occupation); but my primary object throughout has been to offer aids towards the elucidation of all the music that is of real self-sufficing importance, and to refrain from obscuring this end by the prosecution, to more than a slight extent, of side issues, however interesting. In a word, the book has been designed from the standpoint of a musician rather than from that of an antiquarian; and even then more for the general music-lover than for the technically erudite.

To conclude any history that reaches to our own day is far from easy; fresh vistas seem continually to arise and to demand treatment in footnotes and appendices. After considerable hesitation, I have thought it best to refrain from mentioning by name any living English composer who was born later than 1860. This date has been chosen so as to include all those whom it was impossible not to specify, and at the same time to avoid any sitting in judgement upon younger men; entitled though we may be to criticize here and now the individual productions of the latter, yet their total output can hardly yet be able to challenge opinion on their work as a whole. Of course serious qualifications are anyhow necessary in criticizing the work of any living composer; but, as Rückert says in the poem so perfectly set by Brahms—

Mit vierzig Jahren ist der Berg erstiegen,  
Wir stehen still und schau'n zurück—

and a judgement of some kind becomes for the first time possible (though, even among these older men, I have purposely refrained from mentioning more than five—the surviving four of the five ‘Leaders of the Renaissance’, as they are called in Mr. Fuller Maitland’s *History of English Music in the Nineteenth Century*, and the one other whose star is of later ascendance). Nevertheless, I thought it necessary, for the due completion of my scheme, to give a brief general sketch, without mentioning names, of the course of the most recent music in England and of the trend, as it appears to me, of the work of the younger generation.



As to the plan of the book, I have hesitated somewhat. I wished, so far as I could, to give a consecutive picture of the course of English music while avoiding the disadvantages which a merely piecemeal chronological system entails. I therefore thought it best to refrain from breaking up the subject except where a fairly tangible line could be drawn, though the result is that the chapters are few in number, and somewhat disproportionate in length—and especially disproportionate considering the fact that in English music twenty years at one time are far more important than a hundred at another; and with a similar motive I have further, within these comparatively self-contained sections, separated the biographical and historical details from the critical examination of the actual music. I am fully sensible that this method has the disadvantage of dividing, sometimes by a considerable number of pages, the facts of a composer's life from the features of his works; but on the whole it seemed to me that this might be regarded as being balanced by the rather more compact treatment of purely artistic questions which it renders possible. The concluding chapter on 'General Characteristics' will be found to deal with various miscellaneous matters not specifically connected with any one period, and consequently difficult to include in the earlier portion of the book.

I should have been glad, had it been feasible, to print many more and also longer musical examples; but I have tried to select some which may fairly serve as illustrations of the various points of interest, without of course in any way claiming to be exhaustive specimens of their composers' methods. My urgent desire is to stimulate the reader to acquire for himself as much first-hand knowledge of the music as possible; in an examiner-ridden age we are far too much inclined to attach an altogether ridiculous and harmful importance to parrot-like memorizing of mere dates and facts, that can never be more than the dry bones of a living art.

Apart from the standard older general musical histories, and such authorities as the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Eitner's *Quellen-Lexicon*, the prefaces to modern scholars' reprints of old music, and the musical press (including articles in the publications of



the 'Internationale Musik-Gesellschaft'), I would express special indebtedness to Dr. Wilibald Nagel's *Geschichte der Musik in England* (which ends, unfortunately, at the death of Purcell), Mr. Henry Davey's *History of English Music* (dealing with the complete subject, but from a standpoint somewhat different from that adopted in the present work), Mr. J. A. Fuller Maitland's *History of English Music in the Nineteenth Century*, and the volumes of the *Oxford History of Music* by Sir Hubert Parry, Prof. H. E. Wooldridge, and Mr. Fuller Maitland. But my main authority throughout has been the music itself, printed and manuscript. For loan of music and assistance in various libraries, my cordial thanks are due to Dr. H. P. Allen, Mr. J. M. Duncan, Miss A. Ruth Fry, Mr. J. A. Fuller Maitland, Mr. W. H. Hadow, Dr. B. Harwood, Mr. A. Hughes-Hughes, Mr. M. J. Nash, Mrs. Reginald Poole, Miss Gertrude Sichel, Mr. W. R. Sims, Mr. W. Barclay Squire, and the Very Rev. T. B. Strong, as also to Mr. F. Jekyll for the Scottish folk-tune 'O cuckoo of the grove', taken down by him from the lips of Mr. J. Robertson, a fisherman of Mull.

ERNEST WALKER.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
July, 1907.

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#### CORRIGENDA

Page 4, line 23, *for Duns read John*

Page 6, line 25, *after last add* (most probably, on other evidence, Henry III)

Page 69, line 8, *for semiquaver read quaver*



## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH MUSIC

A BOOK that avowedly concerns itself, first and above all, with English music as a living artistic speech must necessarily pass lightly over the earliest stammering utterances; the detailed examination of these is only part of the work of a historian of art, in so far as he is also able to turn himself into an antiquarian pure and simple. And indeed the art of music, as we western Europeans know it to-day, is little more than four hundred years old; compared with painting, and still more with sculpture or architecture, it is the merest infant. The men whose laborious reséarches have thrown gleams of light on the dark ages before have achieved work of great and lasting value, but to the musician, as such, they have very little to say. Their enthusiasm has sometimes been that of the purely scientific inquirer into obscure corners, or sometimes again has been curiously closely connected with theological zeal; but artistic, in the ordinary sense of that word, it (save quite incidentally) neither has been or can be. And it is only in investigating early music that we feel this break of continuity; Phidias and Rodin speak the same language, and even the cave-dweller scratching the picture of a mammoth on a flint had, in essentials, the same ideal as Sargent. But the pioneers of music, though striving with might and main after art, were always running up against the brick walls of mathematics and theology; they seem somehow to have been men of different flesh and blood from Palestrina and Bach and Beethoven and Brahms. Here and there, it is true, as in the fine swing of monophonic plainsong or folk-tune, we find definite and permanent artistic achievement; but, except for these, music before the middle of the fifteenth century is primarily the concern of the historical antiquarian, and only incidentally of the music-lover as such, whether amateur or professional.

And in England, in default of a great man of the early dawn like Josquin des Près, the line has to be drawn a little later. We may for practical purposes date English artistic music from the dissolution of the monasteries in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century; not indeed that this event had any connexion with music other than a destructive one, but it so happened that about that time English composers first spoke the language we know. The present and the second chapters will concern themselves with the previous centuries, and we find a natural line of demarcation in Dunstable and his contemporaries some hundred years before the Reformation. We may consequently divide the, so to speak, pre-artistic English music into two periods: one will end about 1400, and centre round the famous Reading 'Rota', and the other will include the first men who, however tentatively, can be definitely called English composers, and will carry the history down to the time when, with curious suddenness, the art awakes in the likeness we recognize.

Fixing our eyes chiefly, as in this book we shall always do, on the actual music that has come down to us, we shall not occupy much space in describing the earliest musical activities, the nature of which we know only at second hand. The Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Celtic races all held in high esteem the bards who, whether itinerant or dwelling in a fixed locality, filled an important place in the social economy of the times by their narrative-singing of the deeds of heroes past and present; and though in England the spread of Christianity and, as a secondary result, of the ritual music of the Church, weakened their position, yet the harpers, or minstrels (as, after the Norman invasion, they were also styled), long continued to be held in an honour which the more severe moralists of later days, such as John of Salisbury, were inclined to condemn. We know nothing whatever of the music the harpers played and sang, but, on the other hand, we know from the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald Barry), Archdeacon of St. David's in Wales, who flourished in the latter part of the twelfth century (a little later than John of Salisbury), some facts about the contemporary music of the people themselves, at any rate in some parts of these



islands. In his *Topographia Hibernica* he refers in enthusiastic terms to the excellence of instrumental playing in Ireland, which, to judge from his description, must have been of an unusually advanced kind; he adds that Scotland and Wales were gradually rivalling Ireland in this matter, and that in Scotland, in particular, playing was of a high order of merit. In a later work, *Descriptio Cambriae*, he remarks that the Welsh do not sing their tunes in unison, as is the custom elsewhere, but with as many parts as there are singers, 'all finally uniting in consonance and organic melody under the sweetness of B flat'<sup>1</sup>. And further, he goes on to say that the inhabitants of the northern part of Britain (by which he means Northumbria) make use of a similar kind of symphonious harmony in singing, but only in two parts; and that they do this not so much by art as by a habit which long practice has rendered natural. He adds, indeed, that the children, as soon as they begin to sing, insensibly drop into the same custom of never singing any melody except in parts, and conjectures that the practice was handed down by the Danish and Norwegian invaders—a supposition which has been universally rejected as impossible.

Many and elaborate deductions have been drawn from these words of Giraldus, but the information that they give us is really very slight. His remark on the Welsh part-singing that 'it is their custom to sing in a body, and you can hear as many different songs as you see persons',<sup>2</sup> certainly does not, on the face of it, suggest anything except wild extemporization by a dozen or more singers at once, incalculably rougher, even though it might somehow shake itself together finally, than the extemporaneous descant used by the church musicians. Yet Giraldus can hardly have meant to describe what, if these

<sup>1</sup> 'In unam denique sub B mollis dulcedine blanda consonantiam et organicam convenientia melodiam.' This obscure remark has been interpreted in various ways; most probably it means (and indeed this explanation is borne out by the fragments of early English music that are in existence) that the music either was or could have been generally written with a B flat in the signature, whatever the mode. 'Semper tamen ab B,' an expression in Giraldus' account of Irish music, perhaps means the same thing; but the matter is far from clear.

<sup>2</sup> 'In turba canentium, sic ut huic genti mos est, quot videas capita tot audias carmina discriminaque vocum varia.'



words are taken literally, would be mere confused noise; and both his insistence on the 'B flat' (whatever it may mean), and the reference to the Northumbrian two-part singing as 'similis symphonica harmonia' imply that there was some sort of method in the Welsh choruses, though what that method was it is impossible for us, on this evidence, to determine. It seems practically certain, anyhow, that both the Welsh and Northumbrian customs took their origin from the descant which the people heard habitually from the church musicians; to apply to their own tunes (whatever they were) the same sort of methods that the ecclesiastical singers applied to the plainsong melodies was after all to take a step of an easy kind, and it is very surprising that, if we accept Giraldus' word for it (and he was a widely-travelled and cultured man) no other people except the Welsh and Northumbrians had taken it. But we know absolutely nothing of the real nature of this popular part-singing, what intervals were used or anything else; and in default of all evidence we have no right to devise (as has not infrequently been done) fantastic accounts of the invention of modern harmony by the British laity.

In the ecclesiastical field the lead was apparently taken by Irishmen. In the middle of the ninth century Duns Scotus Erigena seems (though the passage in his *Divisio Naturae* is none too clear) to forecast the methods of Free Organum some hundred and fifty years before any one else; and the Irish monks at St. Gall in Switzerland had great influence in diffusing musical knowledge throughout Europe.

A few fragments of information about early mediaeval church music as practised in England have come down to us; in the main, of course, ritual music followed the same general lines in all countries under the ecclesiastical guidance of Rome<sup>1</sup>, but the English performers seem to have shown, even at this early period, one or two individual traits. The *Speculum Charitatis* of Ailred, Abbot of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire in the middle of the twelfth century, contains a long passage of oburgation of the elaborate church music, with its com-

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Dunstan (d. 988) is credited with the composition of various plainsong melodies.

plicated singing and its powerful accompaniments, including various other instruments besides the organ; independence of voice-parts, with interspersing of rests (the so-called Hocquet), and the knowledge of time-divisions are clearly indicated. John of Salisbury, about the same date, inveighs against the excessive devotion to advanced church music in much the same fashion as he inveighs, as we have already seen, against minstrels; but his language gives us no exact information, except that he particularly disliked the Phrygian mode, the use of which may perhaps have been commoner in England than elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> A treatise of the following century, discovered at Bury St. Edmunds, but now in the British Museum, gives us more details; as its authorship is unknown, the writer is usually referred to as 'the Anonymus of the British Museum'. Here we learn that the interval of the third, which was generally avoided, was largely favoured by musicians of England, especially the western portion; it was, indeed, in use by 'optimi organistae' elsewhere, but 'in Anglia, in patria quae dicitur Westcuntre', most of all.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from this passage the early English theorists tells us nothing of the individual music of their native country; their writings concern the general musical practice of their day throughout Western Europe, without any avowed reference to different local customs, did such exist. The chief, and indeed only noteworthy, among those who wrote before the fifteenth century are Joannes Cotto, Jean de Garlande, the 'Anonymus of the British Museum', Walter Odington, and Simon Tunsted—to whom reference is here made by their best known names, though the first has been sometimes Anglicized into John Cotton, and the second Anglicized or Latinized into John Garland or Joannes Garlandius. Cotto was most prob-

<sup>1</sup> The easiest method of remembering the old modes is to think of them exclusively in connexion with the white keys of the pianoforte: the Ionian starts on C, the Dorian on D, the Phrygian on E, the Lydian on F, the Mixolydian on G, and the Aeolian on A.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that in the old Pythagorean or Boethian system thirds were out of tune has been taken as the chief cause of their late adoption into general use; but a considerable quantity of the earliest harmony is quite as alien to modern ears as any false intonation could be. Musical history leaves indeed no room for dogmatic generalizations as to what the human ear will or will not tolerate.



ably an Englishman, though the evidence is not altogether clear; his treatise was written about 1100, before the period of measured music. It is chiefly concerned with monophonic music, and treats at length questions of notation and also the proper forms of the plainsong melodies; only one chapter is devoted to Diaphony or Organum, where Cotto expounds the new system under which contrary movement was largely taking the place of the old compulsory parallel or oblique methods, and the former strict note-against-note motion was just being varied occasionally by tentative and slight ornamentation. The musical treatises of the next three writers probably all belong to the century between 1220 and 1320, though the dates of the first two are doubtful.<sup>1</sup> Jean de Garlande seems to have been an Englishman, born at Oxford about 1180 or 1190, who when a comparatively young man settled in France, and remained in that country for the rest of his life; if the identification of him with the author of *De Musica Mensurabili Positio* is correct, he was a versatile writer on many of the other liberal arts as well as music, and acquired great celebrity in Paris as poet and scholar. The *De Mensuris et Discantu* of the 'Anonymus' (of whose English nationality there seems little doubt) has by recent research been transferred from about 1190, where Coussemaker was inclined to date it, to 1280 (Wooldridge); it contains, indeed, a reference to 'King Henry the last', which would seem to require 1273 as the earliest year. Walter Odington, whose *De Speculatione Musicae* may with confidence be dated somewhere about the beginning of the fourteenth century, was a monk of Evesham Abbey, and is mentioned in a document of 1316 as among the mathematicians of Oxford; his treatise deals with acoustics, prosody, plainsong, and composition, and is one of the fullest and most instructive authorities on the whole subject of Descant.<sup>2</sup> To Simon Tunsted (c. 1300-1369), head of the English branch of the Minorite Franciscans, is probably (though by no means certainly) to be ascribed the treatise *De Quatuor Principalibus*, which deals with Mensurable Music in rather more advanced form; Ravenscroft, in his *Brief Discourse* (1614), frequently

<sup>1</sup> See Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, i. 155 note.

<sup>2</sup> Burney's *History* was the earliest to deal with it very thoroughly.



refers to it, though he ascribes it to Dunstable, as being the best known person of the adjacent century or two.<sup>1</sup>

Joannes de Muris, a contemporary of Tunsted's, and the author of a valuable *Speculum Musicae*, was claimed as an Englishman by Hawkins, on quite insufficient evidence which is now discarded; and no other treatise worthy of special notice during the centuries before the fifteenth has been even tentatively ascribed to an English hand. Indeed, the writings of Jean de Garlande, the 'Anonymus', and Odington himself do not in detail concern anything less than a universal history of Western music; Englishmen though they were, there was no English school with which they could specially concern themselves, and all their work bears, necessarily enough, on the general problems of the various forms of mediaeval church music, and, therefore, hardly seems to admit of more specific notice in a history confined to one country.

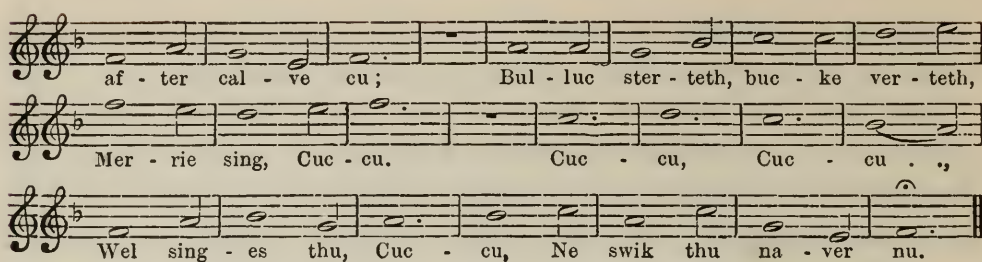
We have now, however, to consider such actual music as we possess, written by Englishmen before the time of Dunstable; the fragments are very scanty (the great bulk of musical performance was, we must remember, extemporaneous descanting as accompaniment to the plainsong melodies), and only one is of great importance, though that is indeed by a long way the most striking piece of early music that exists anywhere. This is the famous 'Rota', 'Sumer is i-cumen in', a four-part canon in the unison on the following melody, the other three voices entering successively at intervals of four bars (the original contains no bar-lines, which are, in anything like a systematic shape, an invention of very much later date)<sup>2</sup> :—

No. 1.  
(With spirit)

Su - mer is i - cu - men in . . ., Lhu - de sing, Cuc - cu;  
Grow - eth sed and blow - eth med And springth the w - de nu;  
Sing, Cuc - cu. A - we ble - teth af - ter lomb, Lhouth

<sup>1</sup> See Davey, *History of English Music*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>2</sup> Expression marks in brackets are, throughout this book, my own suggestions, in the absence of any indications in the original.

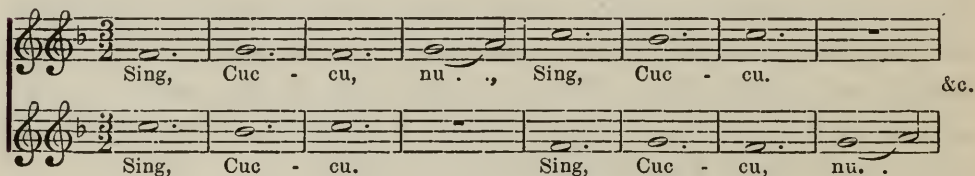


Verteth = seeks the green fern. Swik = cease. The rhythm of bars 4, 40, and 44 is not quite certain.

Throughout this book the above clef will be used for tenor parts.

combined with a 'Pes' in two lower parts, consisting of a persistent repetition of the following:—

No. 1a.



The rhythm of the bar containing a semibreve and a minim is not quite certain.

thus making six-part harmony altogether. The piece occurs in a MS. now in the British Museum, and is in the handwriting of one John of Fornsete, Keeper of the Cartulary of Reading Abbey; it is dated, on palaeographical and other evidence, somewhere between 1220 and 1240, and the words have been identified by linguistic experts as Berkshire or Wiltshire thirteenth-century dialect.<sup>1</sup> Not a particle of evidence exists for describing it, as some older writers have done, as a 'Northumbrian Round'; nor, indeed, have we any adequate grounds for dogmatizing at all about the authorship of either words or music. Possibly, however, we may see something to negative the very commonly received claim of John of Fornsete himself in the fact that he added religious words (which fit the music extremely badly) below the originals—which rather looks as if he were adapting some familiar but unmonastic strain for the use of the inmates of his abbey: all the rest of the vocal music copied by him is indeed strictly ecclesiastical in character. There is nothing, however, to preclude the supposition that the canonic arrangement of the melody, and the addition of the two-part ground bass, may be due to him.

<sup>1</sup> Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, i. 332, note.



This extraordinary production, which combines beauty of sound and ingenuity of workmanship in a manner that is hardly realizable, were the date not certain, as possible in the thirteenth century, has no parallel in early music; its form is unlike that of any other early work we possess—only the two-part ‘Pes’ follows the method of the Rondel as described by Odington, in which all the parts begin together and subsequently are interchanged—and artistically we may say that nothing written for more than two hundred years afterwards can touch it. If the canon is written out in complete score it will be noticed that consecutive octaves and fifths are occasionally produced, sometimes between two of the four canonic parts, sometimes between one of them and one of the bass voices; but little or no audible harshness happens to result from what to more modern, though not to contemporary,<sup>1</sup> theoreticians are technical flaws. The necessity of at any rate attempting to explain the appearance of a work like this in the middle of what is relatively an artistic desert, has led to much literary controversy of a varied and somewhat exciting kind; and the question cannot yet be said to be settled. The further knowledge of contemporary music, both in England and abroad, which has been acquired since the publication of Rockstro’s elaborate article in the first edition of Grove’s *Dictionary*, has neutralized the force of the arguments drawn from supposed anachronistic conflict of styles in the part-writing; but his main contention—that the melody which forms the basis of the whole is a pure folk-tune of popular and not ecclesiastical origin—still holds the field, though not unchallenged in authoritative quarters.<sup>2</sup> It is true, indeed, that the lilting swing of the tune is not represented in the MS. in its earliest form, the time-values of many of the notes having, as minute examination has shown, been altered by a somewhat later hand, which has also changed, and always

<sup>1</sup> Parallel octaves, fourths, and fifths are indeed the staple of much of the ordinary mediaeval music.

<sup>2</sup> Wooldridge has, in *The Polyphonic Period* (1901), recanted, with somewhat unnecessary decisiveness, the opinion, favourable to the folk-tune theory, which he expressed unhesitatingly in his *Old English Popular Music* (1893). Nagel has no doubt that folk-music is the ultimate basis of the work; Davey seems to incline to the same view, though in his enthusiasm he is not very clear.



melodically for the better, some of the notes themselves; and we must also acknowledge the justice of the observation that contemporary ecclesiastical music not infrequently shows the same springing trochaic rhythm and something like the same freshness of melodic phrase. But it would seem that the essential thing to remember is the perfectly rounded organic unity of 'Sumer is i-cumen in'; even if we pass by the exquisite lilt of the tune as a slightly later accretion, yet the tune, even in an unrhythmical form, has a, so to speak, modern balance of phrase that no contemporary church music shows for more than a short sequence of notes,<sup>1</sup> never, like this, steadily from the first note to the last. And the ideal fitness of the music to the pastoral sentiment of the English words would in itself make us join it originally to them rather than to the conventional Latin verses; we seem accordingly brought to the conviction that this superb tune must be credited with a popular origin—little or nothing as we know about English folk-music of so early a date. Indeed, recent researches into the folk-music of other countries<sup>2</sup> make it quite probable that not only the tune but also its four-part canonic guise may be due to some unknown talent outside the charmed circle of church musicians.

It may well be that 'Sumer is i-cumen in' occupies its position of isolated glory solely in virtue of the extreme scantiness of our records of contemporary English music; but, as matters are at present, it has certainly no rivals, even of the humblest kind. Before the thirteenth century we have hardly anything quotable; the 'Neum-notation'<sup>3</sup> in the *Winchester Tropary* of the tenth century and elsewhere is not musically decipherable with any confidence, and we are largely thrown back on the examples contained in the theoretical treatises, which have no special reference to English methods. The most important fragment we possess is a two-part Hymn to St. Stephen in a Cornish MS., dating apparently from

<sup>1</sup> Of course the great plainsong melodies are in themselves as subtly and finely organized, in their own special ways, as any music in the world; but their rhythmical qualities are totally obscured in all mediaeval settings.

<sup>2</sup> See Adler's inquiries into the popular origin of musical 'Imitation', quoted by Nagel.

<sup>3</sup> i. e. sundry marks like shorthand, placed above the words.

the eleventh or early twelfth century<sup>1</sup>: this piece, written in alphabetic notation, is a harmonization of a plainsong melody on the methods of what is known as 'irregular organum'—parallel, contrary, and oblique motion being all employed, without any apparent principle as to intervals, all of which appear in a haphazard sort of manner. The music to the first three words may perhaps be quoted<sup>2</sup>:—

No. 2.

Vox PRINCIPALIS.

Ut tuo . . . pro . pi - ti - - a . . . tus &c.

Examples in contemporary continental MSS. prove, however, that this sort of work was in no way peculiar to England, but the material for forming any judgement is so scanty that it is impossible to say whether any national differences did exist at this period. We have, however, a fair number of specimens of vocal (ecclesiastical and secular) and also instrumental English music of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, vague though nearly all of them are; perhaps we may quote portions of what seem to be the three best. A 'Salve virgo' has considerable beauty of style in its archaic and somewhat tentative manner; it starts as follows, the tune being in the lowest part<sup>3</sup>:—

No. 3.  
(Moderately quick)

Sal - ve vir . go vir - gi - num . . ,  
pa - rens ge . - ni - to . ris,

<sup>1</sup> See Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, i. 91-5: the body of the MS. is of the tenth century, but this piece is in a later handwriting.

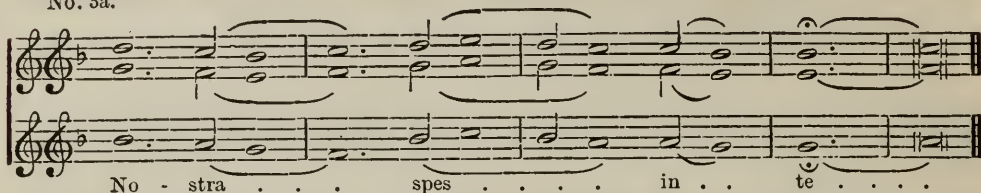
<sup>2</sup> Fleischer has, much more ingeniously than convincingly, evolved a Celtic folk-tune out of the upper part.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, i. 315-6; I take the F to the second syllable of 'parens' to be a misprint for G.



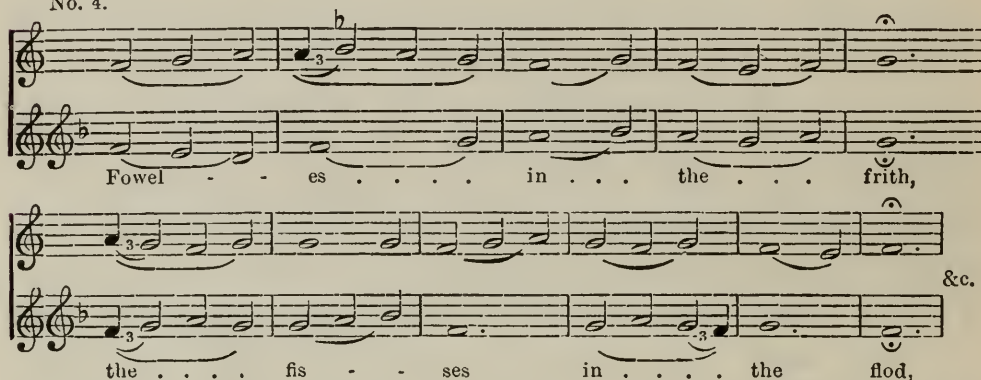
The phrase is repeated to different words, with a couple of added passing-notes in the middle voice; its first half is then repeated a third time (with only one of the just-mentioned passing-notes), but the second half is changed, and the little composition ends with a coda<sup>1</sup>:—

No. 3a.



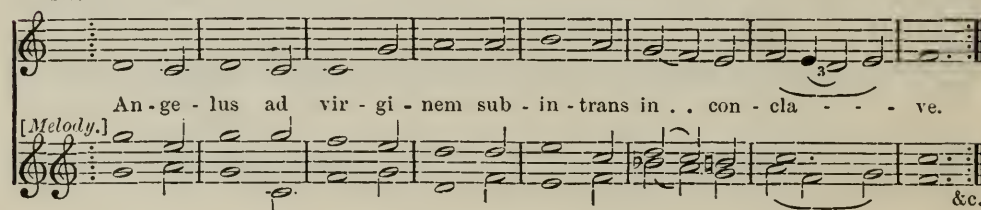
Or there is the bright little song, 'Foweles in the Frith,' similarly of the latter half of the thirteenth century—

No. 4.



Or again, some hundred years later, a three-part setting of the hymn (itself considerably older) that has been made famous by Chaucer's reference in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*—

No. 5.



'Queen of evene' and 'Jesu Christes milde moder'<sup>2</sup>, both dating from about 1300, though less artistically interesting

<sup>1</sup> Quite possibly (though I have not seen the suggestion made) it was passages like this—a sort of formal refrain to a work otherwise fairly free—that first gave the singers of the next century the idea of *faulx bourdon* (see the next chapter).

<sup>2</sup> Both printed by Wooldridge.



than the above, are noteworthy as exemplifying what—if we may judge from contemporary continental work—was a somewhat specifically English smoothness of movement; both of them, lacking in quality though they are, are also curiously lacking in the harshness so wellnigh universal at the time abroad. During the fourteenth century rhythms gradually became more varied, and harmonic schemes less cacophonous; and in this progress England was, so far as our scanty material lets us know, in the forefront of musical nations. In Stainer's *Early Bodleian Music* there is printed a motet, 'Petrum Cephas ecclesie,' probably of English origin, and dating from about 1375, which shows very remarkable euphony of part-writing, even if, as was always the case till the next century, the harmonic outlines are structurally vague; the less elaborate two-part work shows, however, naturally greater approximation towards that discovery of satisfactory final cadences which is one of the main features of the music of the beginning of the next century, as with the addition of extra parts this particular problem was greatly complicated.

Among the earliest specimens of purely instrumental music we may refer to a couple of very curious pieces in a MS. formerly at Robertsbridge Abbey in Sussex; they are written with two parts on a single five-lined stave, the melody being accompanied by sustained notes in the middle part, as well as by a bass written in letter-notation below the stave<sup>1</sup>. The long thirteenth-century dance-tune from the Douce MSS. in the Bodleian Library, as being purely monophonic in character, will be mentioned in a later chapter dealing specifically with folk-music; but in the same MS. as 'Sumer is i-cumen in' there is what appears to be a dance in two-part harmony of the common contemporary type, consisting of twelve sections, each four bars long, with a considerable amount of repetition on a more or less organized plan. But all this early instrumental music comes to extremely little artistically, and its quantity is so small that no general deductions of any kind can be drawn.

<sup>1</sup> The words 'ouert' (ouvert) and 'clos', which occasionally appear, are common in the contemporary Ballades of the French composer Machault, and indicate 'half-closes' and 'full-closes'.

## CHAPTER II

### MUSIC IN THE FIFTEENTH AND EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

WITH the beginning of the fifteenth century we enter on the period of systematization of artistic material—at first very tentative and fluctuating, but gradually increasing in steadiness and scope. In the same century we are also able for the first time to observe something in the nature of a national school of music; England and the Flemish countries and, later on, other nations in their wake, produced men who, in a sense of the word virtually unknown before, were musical composers,<sup>1</sup> with their own personal individualities and their own racially distinguishable characteristics, and using material which, in essentials, is the same as ours to-day. In the previous chapter, indeed, we have noticed a few points which, even in the scantiness of our records, still serve to separate, more or less, the work of England from that of other countries; but these marks are in pre-fifteenth-century music so slight as to be virtually negligible from an even moderately broad point of view. Now styles begin to diverge in a manner that attracts attention; and by the end of the period dealt with in this chapter we can recognize in the musical world definitely competing methods of expression—very small, however, though the differences naturally are still compared with those of yet later times.

We possess important evidence of the specially English methods of descant current at the beginning of this period in a theoretical treatise, *De Preceptis Artis Musicae*, by one Gulielmus Monachus—the name by which alone he is known

<sup>1</sup> It would perhaps be unjust to refuse the name altogether to Machault and Landini, and the numerous other continental fourteenth-century writers whom we know; but their notions of harmonic propriety are not correlatable, as Dunstable's are, with modern methods.



to us—who seems to have been an Englishman resident in North Italy,<sup>1</sup> and produced the work in question towards the middle of the fifteenth century or perhaps earlier. After describing and giving general rules for the plain three-part *Faulx Bourdon*<sup>2</sup> and its (probably later) two-part variant, the *Gymel*,<sup>3</sup> he goes on to say, ‘among us the method of this *faulx bourdon* could be taken in other ways’; and he then explains the specifically English methods of breaking up the rigid note-against-note method by ornate counterpoint of different kinds (thus satisfying the desire for variety of effect while avoiding, at any rate in great measure, the risks of cacophony, which extempore descant on the old system, when in more than two parts, inevitably entailed<sup>4</sup>), and also of, under certain circumstances, supplying a ‘contratenor bassus’, completing the harmony in a manner which clearly foreshadows the system on which all modern music is built.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coussemaker thought that he was an Italian by birth, but most recent authorities have inclined to the view expressed in the text; the authoritative passage in the chapter *De Regula Contrapuncti Anglicorum* is certainly vague, but the probabilities are in favour of its implying his English descent.

<sup>2</sup> The *faulx bourdon* (false bass) consisted of three-part consecutive thirds and sixths, which were for some little time after its introduction (at the Papal Court at Avignon about 1340) written as consecutive thirds and fifths, but with the understanding that the singer of the *cantus*, in the lowest part, should transpose to the upper octave—thus producing the thirds and sixths. Wooldridge suggests that this curious quasi-deception may have been originally due to a desire on the part of the singers to conform in externals to the decree of Pope John XXII, issued in 1322 (which inveighed bitterly against the uneccelesiastical character of the elaborate music of the time, and required a return to the strict organum on the unaltered plain-chant) and at the same time satisfy their artistic inclinations for something less harsh than the old method. But this explanation hardly fits the case, as thirds, whether combined with fifths or sixths, were in themselves entirely unknown to the old organum in fourths, fifths, and octaves, which were all the intervals that the severely conservative Pope would permit; as a matter of fact the movement in the direction of artistic systematization was far too advanced to be checked by so summary a method, which only resulted in diverting it into another and still more ‘modern’ channel than florid descant of an irregular and frequently cacophonous kind.

<sup>3</sup> Consisting of consecutive thirds, or, in inversion, consecutive sixths (when it seems to have been sometimes, somewhat confusedly, called *Faulx Bourdon*). Later on the word seems to be used to indicate the temporary dividing of a single voice-part into two—it is so used in the works of Tye and Gibbons, for example, and earlier; but sometimes again it is used in a vague manner that is hardly possible to explain dogmatically.

<sup>4</sup> All the parts might start according to rule, and continue each in the allowed relation to the written plainsong: but there was no sort of guarantee that the extemporaneously added parts would agree with one another also.

<sup>5</sup> The clear details in the chapter on *Faulx Bourdon* in Wooldridge’s *The*



It is clear that by the year 1400, or thereabouts, Faulx Bourdon, though in universal adoption in Western Church music, had in England reached a specially high point of artistic development; and this fact has led some writers to claim the discovery of the euphonious character of thirds and sixths as an exclusive glory of this country. We have, however, in the previous chapter seen that there is no evidence whatever to prove that the Welsh and Northumbrians of the twelfth century harmonized their folk-tunes (as has been sometimes speculatively supposed) in thirds and sixths rather than in fourths and fifths or any other intervals; the English descanters did, indeed, occasionally use the imperfect concords, but so did those of other nations, and the specimens of English harmony that we possess before the age of Faulx Bourdon show, as the previous chapter has exemplified, no special leanings in that direction, nor do the great English theorists of the thirteenth century refer to the matter at all, apart from the vague reference of the 'Anonymus' to the use of the third in the 'West Country'. All that we can definitely assert is that the new method, once established by the French singers, was very soon adopted in England, where it was developed to a special extent, firstly in the somewhat rudimentary form described in Tunsted's *Quatuor Principalia*, and afterwards in the more perfect manner of which Gulielmus Monachus treats; we have no ground whatever for assuming that, before the middle of the fourteenth century, strings of thirds and sixths were not as unfamiliar in England as elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

We can, however, confidently claim the distinction of having been the first nation to produce a real school of euphonious composition, which sprang directly from this artistic development of the ritual music. These men of the early dawn are very shadowy figures, of whose lives we can say little that is definite; but a considerable quantity of their work is extant. Two manuscript volumes, respectively in the

*Polyphonic Period*, ii. 81 sqq. should be consulted by the technically-minded reader.

<sup>1</sup> 'Foweles in the Frith' (see p. 12) contains two or three consecutive sixths; but these are quite exceptional, and anyhow are not enough to form the basis of any theory.

Bodleian Library in Oxford and in the library of St. Edmund's College at Old Hall in Hertfordshire, supply between them over two hundred pieces dating from about 1415 to about 1480; many others exist on the continent, at Vienna (formerly at Trent), Bologna, and Modena, and still others, of less importance, in different parts of England. Some of the most noteworthy pieces exist in different versions; and altogether we cannot now complain, as hitherto, of paucity of material, more or less inaccessible to the average student though most of it as yet remains.

The most important of these composers is certainly John Dunstable, about whom has gathered a curious mass of legend and untrustworthy rhapsody—his identification<sup>1</sup> with Dunstan, the famous ecclesiastical statesman of the tenth century, being perhaps the most remarkable misunderstanding. There is no reason to connect him with the town of Dunstable in Bedfordshire, and of biographical details we have absolutely none, except the date of his death (1453), according to an epitaph copied (by the seventeenth-century antiquary, Stow) from his tomb in St. Stephen's, Walbrook, London; in another epitaph preserved in Weever's *Funeral Monuments* (1631) he is described as 'an astrologian, a mathematician, a musician, and what not', and some astronomical treatises under his name exist in the Bodleian. However, the fact that the bulk of his music is only to be found in foreign MSS. may perhaps be taken, in default of any evidence to the contrary, to show that he spent much of his life abroad; and, indeed, his fame seems to have been at its highest outside his own native country. The poem *Le Champion des Dames*, written by Martin Le Franc about 1440, explains the superiority of the heads of the contemporary French school, Dufay and Binchois, as compared with their predecessors, by their adoption of the methods of the English school, and especially of Dunstable; and Tinctoris, the celebrated Flemish theoretician, who flourished in the latter half of the century, names Dunstable as the leader of the English school that was the 'fount and origin' of what virtually seemed a new art, so

<sup>1</sup> By Marpurg, the eminent eighteenth-century theoretician, and many others who ought to have known better.



wonderfully did it surpass all previous music.<sup>1</sup> Later writers elaborated this statement of Tinctoris till they made it appear that Dunstable invented counterpoint out of his own head, so to speak<sup>2</sup>; but, on the other hand, the just claims of England to priority of artistic development were for a long time obscured by a chronological error in the life of Dufay, which made him a senior instead of a junior contemporary of Dunstable.

Tinctoris is inclined to ascribe the great advance in music during the century very largely to the institution of royal and princely 'chapels', in imitation of the Papal choir at Rome, which were now being gradually created in most parts of Western Europe; they afforded musicians both a more dignified position and also greater artistic opportunities than could be secured by the ordinary church appointments, and consequently attracted the best performers of the time, and incited them towards advanced composition. Henry V possessed a 'complete chapel full of singers', which followed him to France; and it is quite probable that the Old Hall choir-book, containing compositions from the pen of Henry VI himself,<sup>3</sup> along with many others, is a collection of the music sung in that king's Chapel Royal at Windsor. But of the lives of all these composers we know, as a rule, nothing whatever; indeed, until Henry VII came to the throne in 1485, there are only two English composers besides Dunstable about whom we have even the most minute fragment of information outside their music. Lionel Power, who seems to have been the most famous after Dunstable, wrote a treatise (forming part of a volume, the preservation of which is due to Tallis, who acquired it at the dissolution of the monastery of Waltham Holy Cross), in which he definitely prohibits consecutive unisons, fifths, and octaves—the first theoretical

<sup>1</sup> 'Quo fit ut hac tempestate facultas nostrae musices tam mirabile suscepit incrementum quod ars nova esse videatur, cuius, ut ita dicam, novae artis fons et origo apud Anglicos, quorum caput Dunstable exstitit, fuisse perhibetur.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Invention' is a word that has no place in the vocabulary of a living art—unless indeed it is used so loosely that it is not worth using at all. And, anyhow, there is plenty of earlier independent polyphony, of its kind.

<sup>3</sup> 'Roy Henry' is all the indication that the MS. gives; but Henry VI is certainly the most likely king to be meant.



insistence that we have on what had, by Power's time, become general though not altogether universal<sup>1</sup> practice; and John Alain, a composer of less note, is also known to us as the writer of a poem alluding, in a manner that is far from being easily comprehensible, to musical history and contemporary musicians. Of the other composers whose names have come down to us with their compositions—Gervays, Forest, Benet, Bedingham, Stanley, Stove, Merkham, Cooke, Sturgeon, Damett, Burell, Gyttering, Tyes, Excetre, Pycard, Rowland, Queldryk, Ffonteyns, Oliver, Chirbury, Typp, Swynford, Pennard, Lambe, Mayshuet, and one or two more whose names are illegible—we know absolutely nothing; and many pieces are anonymous. There is, as we shall shortly see, a certain amount of internal evidence hinting at the existence of two schools of English composers, one resident abroad and the other in England, with only a modified interaction between the two; but, after all, this is mere conjecture. It derives, however—in addition to the main evidence of the locality of the MSS.—support from the facts of the life of John Hothby, whom we now know solely by his theoretical treatises; he settled in Italy about the middle of the century, first in Florence, secondly in Ferrara, and afterwards in Lucca, where he remained for nearly twenty years, dying, however, in England in 1487, when on leave of absence. We also have traces of his having visited Spain, France, and Germany; he was a member of the Carmelite order, and a prominent theologian. His compositions seem to have disappeared, and only his treatises remain; he was held in the highest estimation abroad, and a poem written in 1471 asserts that no one equal to Ottobi (as his name was written) could be found 'between the Ganges and Gades'.

Tinctoris, in a continuation of the passage from which quotation has already been made, remarks that at the time he wrote (about 1475) the English composers, after having led, had now come to learn from the Flemings; 'the latter,' he says, 'are from day to day discovering novel methods, but the former (which is a mark of very poor ability) are always

<sup>1</sup> See for example, the penultimate bar of the *Osanna* of Henry VI (p. 26).

continuing in the old paths.' Indeed, it is abundantly true that England, after having had in Dunstable ('*Anglicus ille*', as Hothby calls him) a musician without foreign rival, could not, fifty years later, produce any one worthy to touch the feet of Josquin des Prés—or, indeed, several others besides. The shifting of the balance had as a matter of fact begun almost immediately; Dunstable's younger contemporaries, Dufay and Okeghem, and Obrecht still more, had advanced quickly on the new road, and the methods of the succeeding Flemings ruled the musical world unchallenged. Later on, England learnt all the secrets of the new art of its former pupils, and it is to Flemish influence that the origin of all mature music, in England and elsewhere, is wellnigh solely due; the Flemish school itself died in giving birth to its children, but it is to it that we owe the preservation of the tiny germ which English musicians planted and then left mainly to the care of others. Nevertheless, though it suffered during the supremacy of the Flemings the first of the many eclipses it has undergone, the English school has never become extinct; and its record of five hundred continuous years is much the longest of which any nation can boast.

With the cessation of the Wars of the Roses, music in England took a new lease of life; humanism obtained a firm position, and there was a general revival of interest in art and learning. But, many as were the literary foreigners who journeyed across the channel, it is more than doubtful if any of the prominent Flemish musicians, scattered all over Western and Central Europe though they were, came among them; and, indeed, great in its way as was the advance of English composers at the close of the fifteenth century, it is not till about the second decade of the sixteenth that we can see in any English work any really definite signs of Flemish influence, transmitted, no doubt, by travelled English musicians, as well as by the foreign performers settled at the court of Henry VIII, and also by circulation of MSS. and printed books.<sup>1</sup> Once the finished material was to hand, the time was ripe for the first of our great men; and, indeed, they quickly appeared. But until the genius of Tye and Whyte and Tallis burst upon

<sup>1</sup> Petrucci began to publish Flemish music in 1503.



us, English music was still seeking but not yet finding; though, the right path once found, there followed some seventy or eighty years of a continued splendour, the like of which has not often been known in the history of any art.

We have the names and specimens of the music of a considerable number of composers during the fifty years after the death of Richard III; but of their lives we know but little, and, in the case of many, nothing. The 'prime musician of the nation', as Anthony Wood calls him, was Robert Fayrfax, organist of St. Alban's Abbey, one of the chief gentlemen of the Chapel Royal in London, and Doctor of Music at both Cambridge and Oxford Universities; he died in 1521, but the exact year of his birth is unknown. Other distinguished composers were William Cornysse,<sup>1</sup> master of the children of the Chapel Royal from 1509 to his death about 1523; Richard Sampson, Dean of the Chapel Royal in 1516; Richard Davy, who was appointed organist of Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1490; and Hugh Aston<sup>2</sup> and John Taverner, of rather later date, of whose lives nothing certain is known, though both were obviously musicians of importance. Others who deserve mention are Gilbert Banastir, William Newark (both of the earlier years of this period), Robert Cooper, Richard Bramston, Nicholas Ludford, William Pashe, Thomas Lovell, John Dygon, and Henry VIII himself; but the various MSS. scattered about English libraries contain in all several hundreds of works of the period—all, with but a small handful of exceptions, vocal, and chiefly designed for ecclesiastical use.<sup>3</sup>

Though a few of the fifteenth-century composers, especially Power, are represented both in the English and in the con-

<sup>1</sup> In Grove's *Dictionary*, two composers of the same name are indicated, but no evidence is offered to disprove the ordinary view.

<sup>2</sup> Davey's identification of him with an Archdeacon of York who died in 1522, and is buried beneath an elaborate monument in St. John's College, Cambridge, is purely conjectural, though possibly the fact that numerous MSS. of his are in Cambridge libraries is a point worth considering.

<sup>3</sup> The vagaries of early spelling, of proper names and of everything else, are endless; and a historian puts himself to unnecessary trouble if he tries to be consistent. As a rule, I adopt the older-looking forms of proper names, and refer to the titles of works as the words would be spelt at present.



tinental MSS., yet on the whole those whose names appear in the former do not in the latter, nor vice versa; but the large quantity of anonymous music of the time prevents us from drawing any very definite conclusions. This anonymous music—chiefly, so far as can be judged, earlier than 1450—is of very miscellaneous nature; the barbarous custom of allowing each individual voice to sing totally different words is still in vogue, and we find examples, to English words, of the Ballade form popular in France with Machault and his school, or again specimens of rather elementary two-part Faulx Bourdon or inverted Gymel, where the composer's frank delight in consecutive sixths becomes very wearying, or again little things like the two-part song 'Alas, departynge is ground of woo',<sup>1</sup> which in their way aim, and far from unsuccessfully, at real, genuine beauty of sound and emotional expression. But all this work, though sometimes, as in 'Alas, departynge', of very high merit, is very simple in design; and the time was now coming when composers sought after more advanced things. Stainer's *Early Bodleian Music* contains some notable three-part songs of the period, such as the beautiful 'Go hert hurt with adversitie' and 'Nesciens mater virgo', the bright and rhythmically spirited 'Tappster, drynker', and the elaborate and skilful 'Tota pulchra es': and a large number of anonymous carols of the period, many of which have been printed in various collections, remain in different MSS. A roll of thirteen from the library of Trinity College, Cambridge (duplicates exist elsewhere), has been published in convenient form, and gives a good notion of the rather more ambitious music of the earlier part of the century.<sup>2</sup> They are written sometimes for two, sometimes for three voices; and the three-part work, though containing no imitation, is considerably more elaborate than the attempts of nearly all previous

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, ii. 132-3.

<sup>2</sup> Rockstro's additional parts, though carefully done, are entirely unnecessary anachronisms; but as they are typographically distinguished, no confusion need arise. Recent research has totally disproved the statement in the preface that the carols are 'almost all that musicians possess of English origin between the years 1250 and 1500'; but the volume is still the most generally accessible collection of such music for the average student.

musicians in England. The best known of the set, and the only one which strictly speaking is not a carol, is No. 7, a song of thanksgiving after the battle of Agincourt—a famous piece which has often been reprinted in different shapes. It is a two-part song (though beginning, as was not uncommon, with a powerful unison phrase) followed by a three-part chorus; the central portion, to English words, is based on a very fine tune that may or may not be a folk-song (it is a pity, as Wooldridge has remarked, that the severe Dorian tonality is weakened by the necessary insertion of accidentals to fit with the second voice-part above)—

No. 6.  
(*With spirit and dignity*)

Owre Kyng went forth to Nor man - dy with grace and  
might of . . chy - val - ry; Ther God for hym wrought  
merve - lus - ly, wher - fore Eng - londe may calle and cry.

The concluding chorus is as follows in the Cambridge MS.; the Oxford version, printed by Wooldridge and others, is obviously later and smoother in style :—

No. 6a.

De o gra - ti - as, Ang . . . li . .  
a, Red - de pro . . . vic - to - ri - a.  
[The transcription of one or two notes is not quite certain.]

All the settings in this collection show throughout very much the same methods, and it is quite legitimate to take them all as the work of one composer (whether the tunes are



also his, cannot possibly be determined), but who that may be is quite uncertain. Fuller Maitland, in his preface to the carols, tentatively suggested Dunstable; and his view has been adopted, less hesitatingly, by Eitner, and (with an alternative ascription to Power) by Davey. But there is really no evidence for drawing conclusions of any kind; cadences like that which concludes the chorus (on which some stress has been laid as a point of individual style) are very common in the general music of the period, and indeed it might be argued that the average unchallenged work of Dunstable, as shown in the examples shortly to be quoted, is considerably more advanced than the sometimes decidedly harsh harmony of the carols.

Indeed, Dunstable presents himself to us as the earliest composer of any nationality who can really be said, archaic though his method inevitably is, to have something like an artistic style; his feeling for melodiousness of individual parts is often very remarkable, and occasionally he rises to sheer beauty, as in the delicate little Alleluia at the end of his motet 'Quam pulcra es', from which we may quote part of the final movement:—

No. 7.  
(Graceful and moderately fast)

Si flu - re . . runt . . ma - la pu - mi - ca,  
I - bi da - bo ti - bi u - - be - ra me - a, Al -  
le - lu - ia.

or in a tender three-part 'Beata mater' in the Bodleian

Library, or in the nobly expressive beginning of the motet 'Crux fidelis' <sup>1</sup>:—

No. 8.  
(Slow and solemn)

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Slow and solemn'. The lyrics 'Crux fi - de - lis' are written under the Soprano and Alto staves. The score consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the piece. The second system continues the melody. The third system ends with a double bar line and the marking '&c.'.

Not that his music is by any means always at this high level: not infrequently he moves decidedly stiffly, and he shows a penchant for mere learned puzzles—of the type which, though never at all common in England (where even ordinary canonic writing was unusual), ran riot abroad in the slightly later days of Okeghem—perhaps merely to display his command over his contrapuntal material.<sup>2</sup> And indeed this command is remarkable, and is sometimes combined with real insight into structure on a somewhat extensive basis, as in his 'Veni sancte Spiritus'; whether he or the slightly younger Dufay is to be credited with the priority in certain points must, however, remain uncertain, though in general, and especially with the sanction of Tinctoris' verdict, the older man may legitimately be counted the pioneer. He certainly seems considerably the greatest English composer of the time: Power and Benet, and the rest of those who (as their work appears in the same foreign MSS. as his) may be counted as his school, were men of distinctly inferior ability, who adopted the same general methods without infusing into them any particular vitality of utterance, and the majority of the composers of the Old Hall MS.—most of whom were probably permanently resident in their native country—show still less initiative.

<sup>1</sup> It must be confessed that the promise of this opening—one of the most astonishingly 'distinguished' passages of simple music of any age—is by no means fulfilled in the rest of the work.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, however (see the example in *Early Bodleian Music*, pp. 96, 97), these puzzles work out into something remarkably expressive.



Sometimes—as in this *Osanna* of King Henry VI, which, though perfectly plain note-against-note counterpoint, is yet in its way very expressive—

No. 9.  
(Flowing)

O . . . . . san . na in . . . . .

ex . cel . sis.

we find a genuine striving for beauty; but most of his contemporaries show a conservative acquiescence in older methods, which places them far behind Dunstable, and still more behind those foreigners who were advancing to great things on Dunstable's shoulders. It is true that the Old Hall MS. seems to cover a period of fifty years or so, and shows much variety of style; but the general average of the work, save from the purely historical point of view, would seem to be distinctly uninteresting. We see, indeed, in spite of lapses, more general euphony of part-writing than in the music of the fourteenth century; but such was now, in greater or less degree, current everywhere, and hardly avoidable except by a few violently reactionary spirits. But there is still, in a very large measure, the old persistent reliance on external sources, plainsong or popular melody, for the basis of composition, the same structural casualness and the same lack of harmonic principles, even when the results happen to sound well enough. It certainly looks as if Dunstable's influence was virtually confined to foreign music; as a matter of fact, we hardly, as it happens, know of a single contemporary mention of his name in England.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lederer (*Ueber Heimat und Ursprung der mehrstimmigen Tonkunst*) dates the Old Hall MS. about 1430, in opposition to the judgement of Barclay Squire and Wooldridge, and, for the slenderest of reasons, identifies 'Roy

After the accession of Henry VII there is a marked advance in technique; all the works in the great MS. of Eton College, for example, are designed on entirely original material. Fayrfax himself, however—perhaps this from the *Qui tollis* of his 'Albanus' Mass may serve as a typical specimen of his work<sup>1</sup>—

No. 10. Qui tol - lis pec - ca . . . ta . . . . mun - di, &c.

(Slow)

while the most prominent figure of the time, is not altogether, to us, one of the most sympathetic. He shows little direct trace of Flemish influence; not very much imitative writing is to be seen in most of his works, and he has a distinct liking for pure note-against-note counterpoint, out of which he not infrequently produces results of smoothly massive sound that are thoroughly dignified, but at the same time (as a rule) decidedly heavy and inclined to be dull. But, though specimens of his work occur in wellnigh all the numerous collections of MSS. of the period, he does not by any means completely represent his contemporaries; some, such as Turges, seem

Henry' with Henry V. He also inclines to the theory that Dunstable and Power are really one and the same man—it is true that we sometimes find the same composition ascribed to both, but, considering the frequent carelessness of early copyists, this fact is by no means conclusive.

<sup>1</sup> To save space, the words are not printed in full in this and many subsequent examples.



to have had the same general tendencies, but others—and indeed a larger number—show more affinity to Flemish methods, though, until about the accession of Henry VIII, these methods are adopted only tentatively. Thus several of the concerted songs reproduced in the volumes of the Plainsong and Mediaeval Music Society show a considerable amount of imitative writing (though of a fairly simple kind), and also some sense of structural design: Cornyssh's vigorous and effective 'Hoyda, zolys (jolly) Rutterkyn' and Browne's 'Margaret meeke' are in a regular rondo form, and others show an expressiveness of style that we rarely or never find in Fayrfax.

The fine three-part 'O my deare Sonne',<sup>1</sup> concerning the authorship of which the MS. is silent, contains canonic writing which, very plain though it is, is more akin to contemporary Netherlandish methods than to those of Fayrfax, and also approximates to the foreign style in its somewhat remarkable expressiveness and attention to the sentiment of the words. It is, however, in a MS. collection dating from the year 1516 that we see what are probably the earliest specimens of English music that show definite Flemish influence; the motet 'Quam pulcra es' of Sampson which is found in it<sup>2</sup> shows considerable maturity of manner, and the later Taverner produced a good deal of music in which the methods of the foreign school can be clearly traced. His 'O splendor gloriæ', printed by Hawkins, is not without considerable impressiveness and beauty, especially at the end, and if we look at his five-part 'Dum transisset Sabbatum' we shall see that, in spite of its being built on the basis of a plainsong melody, according to older fashion, there is yet a sort of real distinctiveness of utterance of which a pure conservative like Fayrfax was not capable:—

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the reprint in the Plainsong and Mediaeval Music Society's volume of *Madrigals of the Fifteenth Century* is disfigured by the addition of a painfully up-to-date Gounodesque organ part, and (on the sixth page) by a transcriber's error which produces sheer cacophony for some bars. It is a pity that some of the usually excellent publications of this Society should, through editorial delinquencies, be rendered more or less useless to scholars.

<sup>2</sup> The first part is printed by Wooldridge.

No. 11.  
(Moderately slow)

I.

(TENOR III.  
PLAINSONG.)

IV. V.

Dum trans is set Sab ba

II.

tum . . Ma ri a &c.

III.

Taverner does not, indeed, any more than Sampson, produce those effects of sheer massiveness to which Fayrfax in his best moments<sup>1</sup> could rise; but on the other hand they are much more alive to the signs of the times, and their work (far inferior as it still is to that of the next generation) was artistically far more fruitful. Of the compositions of Henry VIII himself, though he wrote a considerable number of them, very little need be said; he is an eclectic of the feeblest kind, producing sometimes, as in the 'Quam pulcra es' printed by Hawkins, dull exercise-work, sometimes, as in 'In tyme of youthe', an amateurish and equally dull mixture of incongruous methods, and sometimes, as in the song 'Pastyme with good companye', harmonizing a plain tune, which though bright has very little quality, in a fairly pleasing but decidedly elementary manner. The beautiful anthem 'O Lord, the maker of all things', which for a long time was attributed to him, is palpably of later date, besides being of a quality of which this royal dabbler could never have dreamt.

In addition to the ecclesiastical music in which the highest endeavours of these composers are shown there remains a considerable quantity of other music, both vocal and instrumental, of the period centring round the year 1500; and the first music published in England--Wynkynde Worde's Song book

<sup>1</sup> See his five-part *Dona nobis pacem* in Wooldridge—which seems much above the average level of his work.



of 1530—is almost exclusively secular. Besides the part-songs after the ordinary contrapuntal models of the period, we find also numerous melodic songs that could be sung as solos; these may be the original compositions of the men with whose names they are associated, but some may be folk-tunes by the unlearned musicians of the time—here again definite evidence is unprocurable. Sometimes we find them set down in plain unaccompanied form, sometimes they are harmonized simply, in two, three, or four parts—usually, it would appear, for other voices singing simultaneously, the melody being in the tenor.<sup>1</sup> We may leave till a later chapter consideration of those melodies which, on the whole, suggest a popular origin; but others are of a different type. For example, there is the curious ‘In May’ of Thomas Farthing—a rambling and quite informulate tune ranging over a limit of nearly two octaves; but unsatisfactory work like this is not at all common, and as a rule the songs show, whatever their melodic interest (and frequently there is very little of it), a considerable amount of rhythmical organization, very flexible and frequently shifting from duple to triple measure and vice versa,<sup>2</sup> but nevertheless quite clear and intelligible. A feature common to many of the songs of this time is that they are written in the Mixolydian mode, but with a strong tendency towards the key of F major. This was, as we have noticed (p. 3, *note*), one of the distinguishing marks of earlier English work, but about 1500 it is unusually frequent, and afterwards, the mode being treated in the customary continental fashion, entirely disappears.<sup>3</sup>

All through this period, and indeed both earlier and later, the concerted vocal music would seem to have been, as a rule, supported by an instrumental unisonous accompaniment. Not indeed that we have much ground for dogmatizing about

<sup>1</sup> The solo song with specifically instrumental accompaniments is a product of Elizabethan times.

<sup>2</sup> This is a very common feature with early music, before the tyranny of bar-lines was established. Modern editors, however, frequently alter; and some others, who are above such delinquencies, think it necessary to apologize—why, it is very difficult to know.

<sup>3</sup> It is common in the ecclesiastical as well as the secular music. Indeed, its presence in Dygon’s motet ‘Ad lapidis positionem’ (quoted by Hawkins) disproves of itself the ascription of that rather dull work to the latter half of the sixteenth century.

details; we cannot tell with any certainty whether portions that lack words were vocalized, or sung to the same words as are fitted to simultaneous vocal parts (where such exist, and where the words can be so fitted, as is not always the case) or merely played. But we know that motets and chansons were sometimes, like madrigals in later times, performed instrumentally without any voices at all; and it seems most probable that the numerous initial, central and final ritornelli which often occur in the music of these centuries were purely instrumental—where they are found, without any hint of words, at the very beginning of the composition, there can indeed be but little doubt. Sometimes they are of some elaboration, as in the two-part song ‘Now wolde I fayne sum merthis mak’, where the final symphony opens with a point of imitation and is of some length, or in the quaintly beautiful three-part ‘Abide y hope hit be the beste’: the central ritornelli are particularly noticeable in the two-part ‘I have set my hert so hye’ (c. 1425).<sup>1</sup> Later on we often see instances of similar character (Sheryngham’s two-part song ‘My woful hart’, printed by Burney, is an excellent specimen) and there are also in existence numerous lengthy pieces with titles suggesting vocal music, but entirely devoid of words, which probably were meant, at any rate primarily, for instrumental performance; and all through we notice evidence, greater or less in degree, that purely unaccompanied vocal music of an artistic kind was, if known at all, distinctly rare. A curious and late example (belonging indeed to the next period) is found in Edwardes’ ‘By painted woods’ (printed by Hawkins) where there is, for the first five notes, an obviously instrumental bass—printed on the lowest line of the voice parts—which completely disappears throughout the rest of the song. But down to 1600 or later music was often published with mere casual indications of a few words here and there; perhaps the singers knew the rest of the words by heart and fitted them in as they thought best, or perhaps they simply vocalized—a habit which indeed was not infrequently, so we gather from Morley’s *Plain and Easy Introduction* and other sources, employed by indolent singers even when the words were

<sup>1</sup> All these are printed in Stainer’s collection of *Early Bodleian Music*.



written in full. The illustration from Edwardes seems, however, to be one of the last exemplifying the old method; later on the work was under any circumstances tonally homogeneous from start to finish.

In the first years of the sixteenth century we find what, so far as we know at present, are the earliest specimens in England of definitely instrumental composition, unaffected by any vocal considerations. Monophonic exceptions of earlier date have indeed survived; but a couple of British Museum MSS. (the 'Fayrfax Book', originally the property of the composer, and Royal MSS. App. 58) are our oldest authorities for English music of non-popular character in which are to be found effects totally unlike those producible by voices. The latter of these two volumes contains the two most important pieces, an anonymous 'My Lady Carey's Dompe' and a 'Hornpipe' by Hugh Aston,<sup>1</sup> both attempts at the variation-form and showing very clear feeling for keyboard style in their scale passages, combinations of different rhythms, contrasted colour effects, &c., elementary though they necessarily are; 'My Lady Carey's Dompe', though shorter and less elaborate than the 'Hornpipe', is much more musical and expressive, and is, in its slight way, a really charming little piece.<sup>2</sup> We cannot, indeed, assert dogmatically that instrumental music was, apart from popular dance-tunes, unknown in England before 1500; but before the two volumes that have been mentioned, we find nothing altogether unaffected by vocal methods, nothing that shows any trace of the sense of differentiation of style, the awakening of which was a necessary precedent of any real progress, even of the slenderest kind.

It is only towards the middle of the sixteenth century that the researcher into English musical history begins to feel firm ground under his feet; during the period covered by this and the previous chapters his judgements must in very many matters be cautious and tentative until, as is by no means

<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence for ascribing to Aston any other of these pieces, and less than none for calling him by the meaningless title of the 'inventor of instrumental composition' in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> It is quoted in Wooldridge's *Old English Popular Music*, and elsewhere. Stafford Smith tentatively ascribed it to one Edmund Spencer, on what grounds does not seem to be known.

the case at present, he has thoroughly clear evidence on which to rely. No doubt it is possible, by dint of ingenuity and enthusiasm, to build very substantial-looking structures on what are in reality the slenderest of foundations, and the German nation has a peculiar genius for producing scholars of this type, in musical as in other fields; but an attitude of frank uncertainty is more justifiable, if less attractive. Concerning the material that we actually possess we can express as strong opinions as we like; but in too many matters connected with early musical history, the individual writer's predilections have been virtually accepted by him as evidence, and the desire for compact systematization has outrun the actual facts. The confusion consequent on the dissolution of the monasteries resulted in the loss of the greater part of the material which would have enabled us to be more dogmatic about the earlier centuries; some of it, such as the Old Hall MS., has come to light again within the last ten years or so, and very possibly there exists a good deal more as yet undiscovered. But till we know more facts, we must needs be cautious in our opinions.



## CHAPTER III

### MUSIC OF THE MID-SIXTEENTH CENTURY

WE need not linger much over the biographical details of the lives of the first great musical artists of England ; indeed, the information we possess is but scanty, and dates have often to be supplied approximately, if at all.

Christopher Tye was born in the early years of the century, probably about 1510 ; he was a singer at King's College, Cambridge as a boy and in early manhood, and from 1541 to 1562 was organist of Ely Cathedral. In later life he took orders in the reformed Church, and seems largely to have abandoned composition ; he died in 1572. He wrote much music for the ecclesiastical service, both in the older and the newer forms ; during the reign of Edward VI, whose musical tutor he was, he produced a setting of the first fourteen chapters of the ' Acts of the Apostles ', to a metrical translation of his own.

Robert Whyte was a pupil of Tye, whose daughter he married, and whom he seems to have succeeded in the organistship at Ely ; according to some evidence he died there in 1567, but other facts seem to point to his subsequently holding a similar post at Westminster Abbey, and dying in 1575—the commonness of the surname throws difficulties in the way of exact research. The majority of his compositions (very few of which have as yet been printed) are to Latin words ; but he also wrote several English anthems, and a small quantity of instrumental music.

Thomas Tallis was born probably about 1515 ; he was organist of Waltham Abbey for some years before its dissolution in 1540, and subsequently a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, a post that he retained through all the changes of state religion till his death in 1585. His compositions include specimens of all the forms practised in his day ; but the great majority are vocal and ecclesiastical in character. In 1575 he

and Byrd<sup>1</sup> were granted a monopoly, of twenty-one years' duration, of the right of printing music and music-paper—the first known issue of Letters Patent of such a kind. The first work the joint grantees issued was their own 'Cantiones' in five and six parts, sixteen of the thirty-four being by Tallis.

Of the lives of the other contemporary composers we know still less than we do of those of Tye, Whyte, and Tallis; and we have little more than their names and their works—which, after all, are to the musical student the only vital concerns. John Shepherd was as a boy a chorister of St. Paul's Cathedral, and was subsequently—from 1542 to 1551, with a couple of intervals—connected with Magdalen College, Oxford, as organist and Fellow. John Redford, organist of St. Paul's Cathedral about the middle of the century; Robert Parsons, a gentleman of the Chapel Royal at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth (died 1570); John Thorne (died at York, 1573); Robert Johnson,<sup>2</sup> a Scottish priest who fled to England and seems to have settled at Windsor and perhaps to have acted as chaplain to Anne Boleyn—all these flourished about the same time and devoted themselves exclusively, or nearly so, to ecclesiastical work, to both English and Latin words. Of John Merbecke, lay clerk and afterwards organist of St. George's Chapel at Windsor, we know a little more; he was arrested as a Protestant heretic towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII, and narrowly escaped burning—in 1550 he issued his well-known 'Book of Common Prayer noted', and, having escaped persecution under Mary, produced in the following reign several theological books and some church music. He died about 1585, a little before William Mundy, a gentleman of the Chapel Royal for nearly thirty years under Elizabeth, who seems nevertheless to have been a secret adherent of the older faith: Richard Farrant was also attached (with intervals of a few years) to the Chapel Royal from some time in the reign of Edward VI till his death in 1580. Some secular music by these last two composers is in existence; but the bulk of their work was, like that of most of their con-

<sup>1</sup> See the next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> To be distinguished from the later Edward Johnson and Robert Johnson, junior; see the next chapter.



temporaries, written for church use. William Blitheman (died 1591), though also connected with the Chapel Royal, and master of the choristers of Christ Church, Oxford, was, on the other hand, chiefly an instrumental composer; he was the master of Bull, the great musician of similar tastes in the next generation. Richard Edwardes, of somewhat earlier date (died 1566) was, like Blitheman, connected both with Christ Church and with the Chapel Royal; he was chiefly a lyric poet and dramatist, and it is doubtful if the music of the well-known composition attributed to him is really, as the words undoubtedly are, from his pen,<sup>1</sup> though many of the manuscript collections of the time contain motets and other similar works of his.

It does not lie within the province of this history to deal with the ecclesiastical changes that took place at the Reformation save in so far as they affected the music sung in the churches; but, with the exception—which is one of the greatest magnitude—that an enormous mass of music was destroyed in the process of suppressing the monasteries, and also under the Protestant régime of Edward VI, the actual artistic upheaval was far less considerable than we might have imagined. The main part of the official music of the pre-Reformation services (which fell into two parts, the Mass and the ‘Divine Service or Hours of Prayer’) dated from the sixth century or earlier; but in addition there was much unofficial harmonization of it, the oldest known being found in the tenth century ‘Winchester Tropary’, to which reference has already been made. The plainsong itself gradually began to be modified and to disappear; in many compositions, from Dunstable downwards, it survives only in the opening intonation and perhaps a few places in the later course of the piece, and ecclesiastical music was increasingly written on themes merely suggested by the plainsong, on themes of a secular character (though this happened less frequently in England than elsewhere, the three Masses on the folk-song ‘Western Wind’ by Tye, Shepherd, and Taverner, being the only notable instances), or finally on entirely original material.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See later, p. 50, for the authenticity of ‘In going to my naked bed’.

<sup>2</sup> Composers often omitted the Kyrie or the Creed from their settings of

The pre-Reformation Mass music had grown so elaborate that it sometimes omitted words altogether or caused different sentences to be sung simultaneously, and the canticles<sup>1</sup> had similarly tended to become unintelligible; the Reformers wished to allow the words to be heard by the congregation, but this was the whole sum of the change in method. The complaint was directed towards the over-complexity of the setting, not towards the plainsong itself; the Gregorian tones were taken over *en bloc*, and the subsequent Anglican chants were gradually evolved out of them by processes of harmonizing and rhythmicizing and gradual shedding of plainsong material—parallel with a similar development in general ecclesiastical music, in which fragments of plainsong survived here and there for some considerable time. And so we find purely syllabic unharmonized settings of the plainsong, as in Merbecke's historically famous Prayer-Book, or purely syllabic harmony, entirely rhythmless apart from the words, as in an extremely dull service by Heath printed in some of Day's early Psalters, or the kind of work exemplified in services of Causton and others, which, while not obscuring the words at all, use contrapuntal devices to a certain extent. The modern anthem, which first came into being at this time, is a fusion of three different streams—the harmonized antiphon (from which its name is derived), the harmonized 'sequence', and the elaborate psalm-settings, half-way between chants and anthems, which we find in the works of Byrd and Gibbons and other post-Reformation composers.

The ideal of the extremists in England and at the Council of Trent was, as a matter of fact, identical—the total abolition of all ecclesiastical music except the traditional unharmonized plainsong; this ruinous artistic calamity being averted, nothing very much happened—nothing, at least, of a kind really to affect the work of the great composers. Tye and Tallis were no more hampered by having to write the only very sparingly polyphonic *Acts of the Apostles* settings or the plain 'Dorian'

the Mass—the latter especially often, no doubt in order that the congregation might have the opportunity of taking part in singing the familiar plainsong.

<sup>1</sup> The Magnificat had, owing to certain reasons of early ritual, been the pioneer in the path of the development of harmonized music.



service than any modern composer is by occasionally producing solid and earnest official work outside the lines of his normal development. It is true that a considerable number of composers of slenderer artistic powers seem to have found the temporary difficulties of the situation insoluble; but the leaders of music were implicated neither in the inartistic extremes which caused the reaction nor in those which resulted from it. No doubt, during the full flush of the reforming movement, the great works of Tye and Whyte and Tallis remained unheard except in private; but their composition went on all the same. Organs were temporarily silenced (this indeed was the first step for the reformers to take, as there seems no doubt that the complaints of over-elaboration were directed at least as much at the excessive floridity of the organists' accompaniments to the plainsong, as at anything done by the singers); but the musical establishment of the Chapel Royal remained virtually unaltered<sup>1</sup> through all the ecclesiastical upheavals, and the only fresh form of composition that resulted was the psalm-tune, a purely Protestant invention. Towards the end of Henry VIII's reign Coverdale had published a collection of Lutheran tunes under the title of *Ghostly Psalms and Spiritual Songs* (which was soon suppressed), and under Edward VI we find examples of psalters with psalm-tunes, sometimes plain and sometimes slightly polyphonic in harmony: several more musically important collections published by John Day appeared early in Elizabethan times, and subsequent issues of various kinds are numerous.<sup>2</sup>

In Scotland the results of Knox's reforming eloquence were far more drastic than anything that happened in England. There seems to have been a considerable school of Scottish composers, if we may judge from the *St. Andrew's Psalter*, which, though written in 1566, contains Latin motets of no doubt earlier date by several named native musicians, together with instrumental pieces, and harmonized psalm-tunes and canticles: Thomas Wood, the transcriber, is a strong opponent

<sup>1</sup> It was frequently, however, necessary to use the methods of the press-gang in order to keep up the supply of choristers (Burney, iii. 22).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter xiii. For the whole subject see the very detailed and admirable article 'Psalter' by Wooldridge in Grove's *Dictionary*.

of the new inartistic régime. To a slightly earlier period belongs a theoretical treatise in Scottish dialect, now in the British Museum, containing many extracts from anonymous masses and motets; but when the Genevan order of things was established all ecclesiastical music except unisonous psalm-singing was forbidden, and from that day to this Scottish church music has, apart from the psalm-tunes, been an absolute desert.

The church music of this period, as also that of Byrd in slightly later times, offers one special difficulty to the historian. We have abundant ocular evidence of the adaptation of an English version to music originally written for Latin words; but in very many cases we cannot be sure whether the work is originally English or not, as the Latin form may easily have been lost. This uncertainty entirely debars us from attempting to draw universally applicable deductions from supposed differences of style between the musical settings of the two languages; all we can do is to take each individual work on its own merits, and refer to it by its most familiar title.

The three great names of this period are Tye, Whyte, and Tallis; and of these Tye, the earliest in date of birth, shows the greatest affinity with the methods of the previous time. Most of the older angularities and harshnesses which still survived in the work of many of his contemporaries have indeed disappeared in his own; but there is still, in much that he wrote, a good deal of stiffness of style that we very rarely find in Whyte or Tallis. The six-part 'Euge bone'<sup>1</sup> Mass, though very grandiose and finely built throughout, and generally accepted as the most complete specimen of Tye's mature powers, is not—at any rate except to those endowed with special appreciation of the type—altogether free from the charge of dryness. But it is perhaps doubtful if this Mass, though certainly one of Tye's very largest works, quite deserves the pre-eminence that has usually been accorded to it; Tye seems, on the whole, to have been (like, as we shall see, several

<sup>1</sup> The title is Tye's own, but there seems no 'Euge, bone' nor 'Euge, serve bone' antiphon that shows anything like the musical phrase which is the basis of this Mass. It has been supposed, indeed (though there is no precedent for such a proceeding), that Tye meant the title to be taken as an expression of his own opinion of the special value of the work.



other English composers of later date) artistically more inspired by words that gave some opportunity for emotional feeling than by the traditional and purely impersonal words of the Mass. Among the works written for the Roman service we may, for example, specially notice a five-part 'Miserere mei, Deus,' with its sombre opening and its fine brightening at the words of confidence (the chromatic change in the middle part is very unusual and striking)—

## No. 12.

(Slow and solemn)

Mi - se - re - re me - i, De - us, &c.

quo - ni - am in te con - fi -  
quo - ni - am in  
quo - ni - am in te con -  
dit te con - fi - a - ni - ma me - a &c.  
fi - dit

or the five-part 'Omnes gentes plaudite manibus,' with its ringing jubilant trumpet-calls:—

## No. 13.

(Quick and vigorous)

Omi - nes gen - tes plau-di - te ma-ni

bus, &c.

Iu-bi-la-te De-o

in vo-ce ex-ul-ta-ti-o

[sempre cres. al ff]

nis

&c.

(With regard to the suggested accidentals, see chapter xiii.)

both of which, in their very different ways, represent the highest level of Tye's pre-Reformation music.<sup>1</sup> His later work to English words strikes out a fresh vein; in contrapuntal dignity and massiveness it is, indeed, intimately connected with the earlier style, but the simplified methods which, as we have seen, the exigencies of the situation obliged Tye to adopt in the bulk of his *Acts of the Apostles* settings, show their traces in a certain melodious and bright directness of utterance, lacking, it may be, something of the grandeur of the former work, but showing more close regard to smoothness and beauty of sound, and also sometimes curiously akin in turn of phrase to the style of the con-

<sup>1</sup> We cannot of course be quite certain as to chronology, but at any rate there is a considerable probability that the works with Latin words are earlier than those with English.



temporary folk-songs, one of which, as we have already noticed, he had, in his younger days, utilized as the theme of a Mass. Anthems like 'I will exalt thee', printed by Boyce, or the splendid 'Praise God in his holiness', of which a considerable portion is to be found in Wooldridge's *Polyphonic Period*, show something quite new in English music; and the smaller works, in their slighter style, show also the same vigorous, straightforward expression, in which we see very definitely the beginnings of modern rhythm, fused without any rude break into the older interweaving and unaccentuated counterpoint. The well-known anthem 'Lord, for thy tender mercies' sake', which has been usually attributed to Farrant, but sometimes also to Tallis or to John Hilton the elder, is far more probably<sup>1</sup> a work of either Tye himself or some one very much under his influence; there is only late and untrustworthy evidence as to its authorship, and the music itself is very characteristic of Tye's style. Tye does not, it is true, show much of the kind of imaginative subtlety that we find so pre-eminently in the best work of Tallis and, indeed, in smaller men like Redford (if 'Rejoice in the Lord' is by him) and Mundy; he works on broad lines, and does not dwell with special fondness on any details. Indeed—though the adjective is perhaps an anachronism—we may say that he, more than any other of his contemporaries, sought to produce music that would be popular; but popularity with him was never inconsistent with musicianship of a kind that is among the permanent glories of the English school.

Tye's pupil, Whyte, is a great composer whose fame is of comparatively recent date; and, indeed, as yet only a small handful of his numerous works have been published. He does not altogether show his master's versatility; practically all his works are of the solidly contrapuntal order, and melody of the kind that is common in Tye's later style is very rare. But still Whyte's music is definitely of the newer school; the old angularity of phrase is much less frequent than in the earlier work of Tye, and the material is thoroughly mastered.

<sup>1</sup> See Arkwright's exhaustive article in the *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, vol. vii.

A sort of delicate grave charm hangs round his compositions; take for example the splendid 'Peccatum peccavit':—

No. 14.

(Slow and solemn)

Pec - ca - tum pec - ca - vit Ie - ru - sa - lem, &c.

prop - te - re - a in - sta - bi - lis fac - ta est &c.

[*assai espress.*]

or the anthems 'The Lord bless us' or 'O how glorious art thou' or 'O praise God in his holiness,' the last of which<sup>1</sup> shows more vigour and movement than his quietly dignified genius ordinarily attained. Though in essential grandeur of phrase his style is not inferior to those of Tye and Tallis at their best, it is as a rule, so to speak, more feminine than theirs; it is easy to see its close connexion with Tye's in technique, but, speaking generally, there is less directness and more subtlety. The individuality of utterance is very remarkable; in a very few years English music had travelled miles beyond the older purely impersonal attitude of the mere

<sup>1</sup> The second part, with its magnificent setting of 'Praise him in the cymbals and dances', is printed by Wooldridge.



handmaid to the Church. Tye, Whyte, and Tallis are the three men to whom this advance is primarily due; and Whyte, though far the least known of the three, is fairly to be reckoned—even remembering that Palestrina and Lassus were contemporaries—as among the very greatest European composers of his time. No English musician deserves more emphatically a tardy resurrection; and his neglect is one of the worst of the too numerous sins of that kind which can be laid to our charge.

But great geniuses as were Tye and Whyte, Tallis was a greater still; he had more versatility of style than either, and his general handling of his material was more consistently easy and certain. Not, indeed, that we need give many words to what is to most Englishmen his best known work—his Prayers, Litany, Morning, Communion, and Evening Service in the Dorian mode; beautifully pure and severe all through, it is the merest note-against-note harmony, with hardly a vestige of the imitative contrapuntal methods which were, throughout Europe, the glory of the century. It is in contrapuntal work that the real Tallis is alone displayed; take for example this truly noble opening of a ‘Lamentation’ that is far too little known—

No. 15.

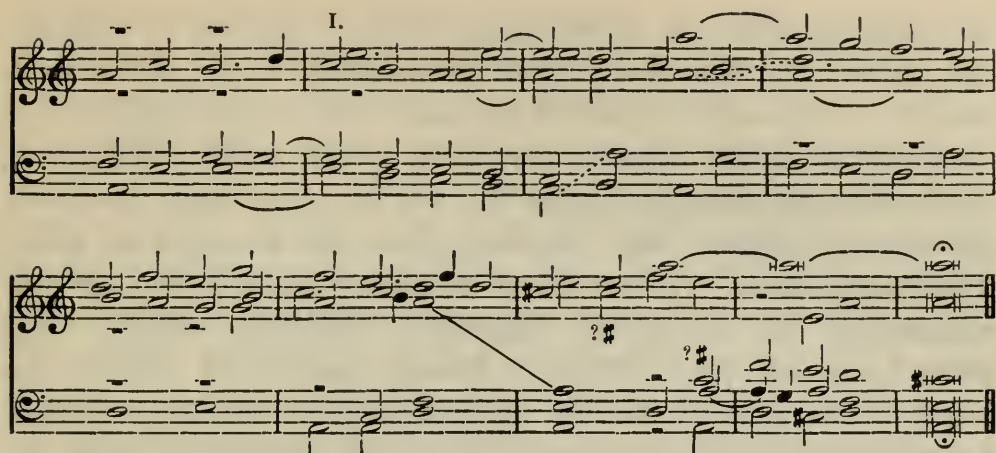
Alto.  
Tenor I, II.

(Slow and solemn)

In - ci - pit la - men - ta - ti - o Hie - re - mi -

Bass I, II.

a Pro - phe . . . . . tae, &c.



or such massive utterances as the five-part 'Absterge Domine', quoted originally by Hawkins, or 'Salvator mundi' or 'Derelinquet impius' (quoted by Burney) or the most familiar of his great masterpieces, the 'O sacrum convivium' (also from the *Gradualia*) Anglicized as 'I call and cry.' The majestic, architectural splendour of works like these and many others may quite fitly claim for them a place by the side of all but the very highest flights of contemporary Italian music—if, indeed, Palestrina himself ever surpassed the last named; in comparison with them the Dorian service drops at once into its proper merely parochial position. In massive music like this we see Tallis at his grandest; there are none of the angularities of phrasing that, as we have just seen, sometimes slightly, to a present-day hearer, mar the effect of occasional works of Tye, even if we feel, retrospectively, that there is still something lacking which Byrd was soon to supply. But Tallis also could, when he so pleased, employ with equal success a tenderer and more expressively graceful style, as in the exquisite little work published in Barnard's part-books as 'O Lord, give thy holy spirit,' or others issued later by Arnold; here he comes very near to what, as we shall shortly see, were the favourite methods of Redford or Mundy, but are but slightly exemplified in Tye or Whyte. In sheer technical facility the famous forty-part motet 'Spem in alium non habui'<sup>1</sup>—written for eight choirs of five parts each—is equal

<sup>1</sup> This has been recently reprinted in score: but unfortunately with twenty parts on the left-hand page and the other twenty on the opposite. It would have been far more convenient, whatever the resulting size of print or shape of page, to print the forty parts strictly one above another.



to anything that the great music of any century or country can show; but the really most astonishing thing about it is that it is a splendid work of art also. It is true that, by the very nature of the case, it cannot show the same qualities of clearness and flexibility that we see in such works as those previously named: but, following the bad example of early historians, most writers have confined themselves far too exclusively to its purely ingenious qualities, which, very remarkable as they are, have always been well within the reach of the highly skilled mathematical musician, whether a genius like Tallis or a mere trifler. Of course, the more the purely technical difficulty presses, the greater is the chance that the artistic element will drop aside; and it is really extraordinary that in spite of the superlative risk of his endeavour<sup>1</sup> Tallis should have produced in this motet a work so finely organized in form, so large and striking in thematic material and, on the whole, so varied in harmony and expression. But, nevertheless, though the great composer, like the great performer, has the power for artistic *tours de force* when he chooses to exercise it, yet neither the one nor the other is seen at his very greatest in such efforts; at a certain point, however perfectly the thing is done, we cannot help becoming unduly conscious of the cleverness of it. And so, far from representing 'Spem in alium non habui', or a thing like the astonishing seven-part 'Miserere' canon printed by Hawkins, as Tallis' supreme masterpiece, we turn back to works like the motets in the *Gradualia*, with their continually varied but always majestic choral colour, their massively sweeping and vitalized phrases, and their superbly confident manliness of style; a passage like that we have quoted on the previous pages represents the composer's master-hand as nothing really does in the forty-part motet, great work though it is.

Tye, Whyte, and Tallis were certainly considerably the three greatest English composers of the mid-sixteenth century; but there are several others who, though producing work less in quantity and, as a rule, slighter in texture, have also a high place in the roll of true musicians. The anthem 'Rejoice

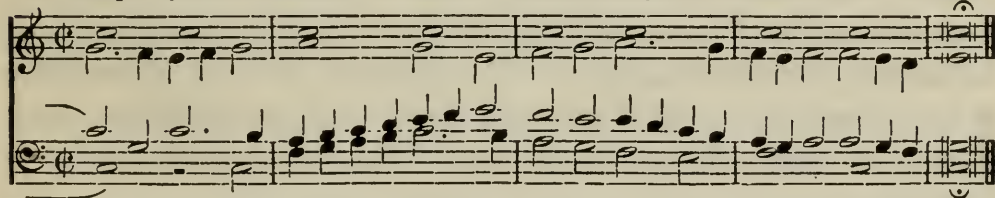
<sup>1</sup> I can recollect no other instance of music (worthy the name) in even half this number of real parts; sixteen is the practical limit.

in the Lord,' the MS. of which is anonymous, was attributed by Hawkins to Redford, and the ascription has been generally accepted<sup>1</sup>; it is true that we know nothing else of Redford's that is at all so fine, but there is no incongruity of style, and the tradition may be presumed to have some weight. Anyhow, the anthem could worthily be signed by the greatest composer of the time; it is of singular purity and clearness, not quite so mature as the finest work of a man like Tallis, but full of a sort of youthful gravity of a most fascinating type, while there is, indeed, perhaps nothing in the whole range of English music more spiritually fragrant than its exquisitely tender closing bars—

No. 16.

*(Slow and soft)*

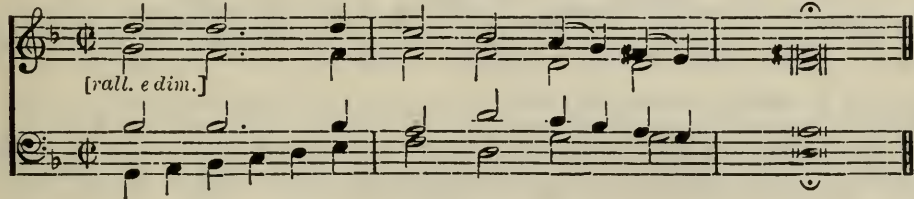
Keep your hearts and minds through Christ Je - sus.



In many ways, indeed, Redford is a rather more masculine prototype of Farrant, who is one of the later composers, dying about the same time as Tallis: 'Farrant in G minor'<sup>2</sup> is one of the most gracefully dignified of all services, reminding us in general style of Tallis' Dorian service, but less austere and massive. Farrant's music has, indeed, a certain femininity about it, using the word in its very best sense; anthems like 'Hide not thou thy face,' with its antequely tender, almost childlike, close—

No. 17.

De - li - ver us from all our sins.



<sup>1</sup> Thomas Causton has been recently suggested by Davey; but his work seems to me on the whole (see especially the separate *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* in Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 31226, and 'O most high and eternal King', in Add. MSS. 31855) so much more stiff, though it is of good quality, as to militate against the probability of his having had a special inspiration for a polished masterpiece like this.

<sup>2</sup> This is perhaps the work of a certain John, not Richard Farrant; but no suspicions can be deduced from the internal evidence.



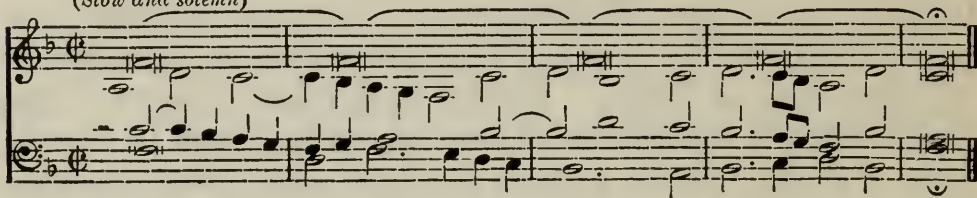
and still more 'Call to remembrance'<sup>1</sup>, a tiny gem of perfect lustre, show qualities that the men of stronger and wider vision were sometimes inclined to overlook.

Farrant is a most attractive composer, and his best works have always had an honoured place in English cathedrals; but a strange neglect has fallen over most of the music of his greater contemporary, William Mundy, who was probably the strongest genius of his day after the three leaders, while his one fairly familiar work—the very sincere and expressive

O Lord, the maker of all things'—has been usually ascribed, in defiance of all evidence, to Henry VIII. The contrapuntal service printed in Barnard's part-books is one of the very finest of all written for the English ritual; it is free from the sort of harmonic squareness of those of Tallis and Farrant, and forecasts rather the methods of Gibbons, though Mundy cannot equal his successor's majesty. The anthems 'O Lord, the world's saviour' and 'O Lord, I bow the knees'—from which we may quote the close of the former<sup>2</sup> and the opening of the latter—

No. 18.

(Slow and solemn)



No. 19.

(Slow and solemn)

<sup>1</sup> The still better known 'Lord, for thy tender mercies' sake', usually, but probably illegitimately, ascribed to Farrant, has been already mentioned (p. 42).

<sup>2</sup> The remarkable but very beautiful C in the alto part of the second bar is

are both, in their different ways, strikingly beautiful works, rather less childlike and more elaborate than those of Farrant, but not at all inferior in tenderness. Occasionally, as in the verse anthem 'Ah helpless wretch' (which Barnard printed) he fails to achieve more than rather stiff though refined work of a simple, hymn-like character, and he never, even at his best, reaches the heights of the greatest things of Tye or Whyte or Tallis; yet he is certainly one of the outstanding men of his time, and deserves to be far more widely known.

Indeed, the level of ordinary English ecclesiastical music at this time was on the whole distinctly high. The numerous part-books (Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 17802-5, containing ninety-six works, many of them by the greatest men of the time, is an inexhaustible treasure-house) contain a mass of motets and anthems and services, nearly all of which are thoroughly solid musicianly work, not, it is true, showing much variety of style, but at the same time plainly the production of a school of composers differing in various features from their continental contemporaries. No doubt the work of the lesser men may not infrequently incline towards a certain stiffness and pedantry; but under all the circumstances there is singularly little. Not, indeed, that all this music demands any detailed notice; it is little more than a reflex—more or less bright, according to the composer's talent—of the work of the men already mentioned. Shepherd, Thorne, Johnson, and Parsons are perhaps the most noteworthy; the motet 'Esurientes' of the first named, which Burney printed in his history, is a good specimen of his solid, straightforward, if rather dull, music, Thorne's 'Stella caeli', printed by Hawkins, has excellent qualities, and Johnson's very long<sup>1</sup> motet, 'Ave Dei patris filia,' is finely austere and more expressive than the bulk of his work. But perhaps Parsons is the best of these lesser men; his elaborate service (there is some seven-part writing in it) that is printed in Barnard's collection, is finely

as plain as possible in the MS. This whole 'Amen' is very like the style of 'Rejoice in the Lord'; indeed, were it not for the Redford tradition, I would feel strongly inclined to ascribe that anthem to William Mundy.

<sup>1</sup> The score in Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 5059 occupies thirty-two pages.



contrapuntal—the harmonic method of Tallis' Dorian service is only slightly employed—and the six-part canonic 'Deliver me from mine enemies, O God' is notably solid and smooth. But there are composers of whom we know far less than we do of these, who were capable of producing work quite on the same level; take, for example, the very expressive 'O God for thy name's sake' of the obscure John Franctyne, that we meet with in the middle of much that is uninteresting in Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 31226.

The religious struggles of the times naturally engrossed men's thoughts, and consequently composers' energies also, with the result that secular vocal music during this period occupied an altogether subordinate position; some half-dozen works, and those quite slight and unimportant, are all that Tye, Tallis, and Whyte seem to have produced between them. Farrant, Parsons, Johnson, and others of less general fame are represented by works which are virtually early madrigals; but nearly all of them (both Burney and Hawkins printed specimens) fall far below the best contemporary sacred music in artistic interest. The numerous anonymous pieces of the kind include the only one that is now remembered, 'In going to my naked bed'; the words are known to be by Richard Edwardes, and Hawkins' conjecture that the music is also by him has been generally accepted and is perhaps likely enough, in default of any evidence to the contrary. This charming little piece is still a great favourite with madrigal societies; and it certainly shows an expressiveness of style which is curiously absent from contemporary secular music as a whole.

The manuscript 'Mulliner Book' (now in the British Museum), from which it is taken, is of much value as containing, along with a considerable quantity of vocal music (including 'Rejoice in the Lord'), a mass of instrumental pieces which afford a clear indication of the development of that branch during the mid-sixteenth century; other MSS. contain many more, and the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book', which will be described in the following chapter, has some of this earlier date, but all the best seem to be contained in Thomas Mulliner's collection. Historically they are of great interest as showing

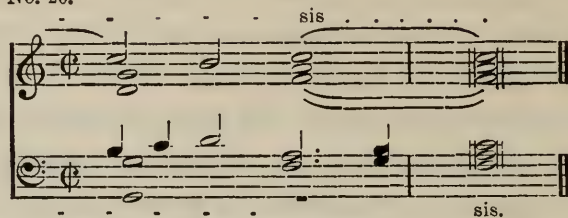
the gradual advance in keyboard technique; in many of them we feel that the composers have not yet clearly differentiated vocal and instrumental methods, and there is nearly always an extreme monotony of style,<sup>1</sup> the same contrapuntal 'species' persisting for long stretches at a time, or indeed throughout the whole piece, but nevertheless the power of playing in florid polyphony is in itself a notable increase, even though the counterpoint is not infrequently (as in a voluntary by Allwood quoted by Hawkins) of a distinctly vague character. It will be most convenient to defer to the next chapter a detailed description of sixteenth-century instrumental music; in the stage represented by the 'Mulliner Book' the ecclesiastical influence, as shown in the great preponderance of elaborations of plainsong melodies (probably meant to be played on the organ either during the service itself or as voluntaries), is still very marked—the two by Tallis on *Felix namque* in the Fitzwilliam Book are typical—and the secular element only appears very fitfully. The pieces of Redford and Shepherd seem on the whole the least artistically uninteresting; those of Blitheman, himself a great executant, show forecasts of the virtuoso fireworks of his pupil Bull, some of whose rhythmical devices are also foreshadowed in such things as a 'Miserere' fantasia by Shelbye, which combines three different measures uninterruptedly from start to finish—an example of sheer mathematical calculation of a kind which seems to have had considerable attraction for contemporary composers.

These relics of the old 'proportional' system find their parallels in other survivals of past methods with which we meet occasionally, even in the works of the greatest composers of the period. Half a century later, Morley refers to a motet of Dunstable, in which the syllables of a word are separated one from another by lengthy rests, as a specimen of remote antiquarian barbarism; but we find exactly the same thing at the end of the first *Osanna in excelsis* of Tye's great *Euge bone* Mass, where the movement of the lowest part is quite astonishingly clumsy—

<sup>1</sup> Rimbault printed, in his book on *The Pianoforte*, a hopelessly and typically dull 'Gloria tibi Trinitas,' by Blitheman, as the earliest specimen of keyboard music.



No. 20.



The great composers of the mid-sixteenth century are among the chief glories of English art, and yet, in a short work like the present, it is necessary to pass them over comparatively quickly; their music includes very many compositions of noble quality, where descriptions and quotations would be of much artistic interest, but it is all on the same general lines. It was not till the later Elizabethan times that composers acquired real versatility of style, on more than the slenderest of scales; and, unless it were possible to treat the earlier composers with the fullness required by monographs, the individual works of Tallis and the rest must needs seem very much alike, even while we remember what has been already said about their occasional differences of method. Byrd himself, who possessed far the most intense and concentrated vision among musicians of his time, touches many more springs; and the great madrigalians, even if men of one general mind, seem to manage somehow to present it more or less in instalments. But Tye, Whyte, and Tallis—even when we allow for the two periods of the first-named and the power of working on different lines which the last displayed—seem to give out the whole of themselves in every single work in which they give anything at all of their best; practically any of their notable pages will serve to illustrate their genius. A very lamentable amount of noble music still remains inaccessible save to the special student; but when it is brought to light, we must not expect to be able to say anything new about the men who wrote it. All their genius was turned into a narrow groove—narrower indeed, relatively, than that followed by their immediate predecessors, who had lived in less spiritually serious times; but it afforded splendid opportunities, and splendidly they were met by the great Englishmen whose names stand at the beginning of the roll of our composers whose greatness is independent of historical conditions.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MADRIGALIAN ERA

THE long-lived William Byrd (1542 or 1543-1623) is the typical figure of the music of this period, in every form of which—instrumental, secular vocal, and ecclesiastical—he left numerous works. He is said (though the statement does not rest on contemporary evidence) to have been a pupil of Tallis, and was appointed organist of the Cathedral of Lincoln (of which town he was probably a native) when about twenty years of age; he subsequently joined the Chapel Royal, and remained in the service of the Court throughout his life, though an avowed Romanist and suffering considerable persecution in consequence. Mention has been made in the previous chapter of the monopoly in music-printing (for a term of years) granted to Tallis and Byrd in 1575, which on the death of the former in 1585 became Byrd's sole property. The works published during his lifetime include two sets of *Cantiones Sacrae*, and another set the joint composition of himself and Tallis, two books of *Gradualia*, *Psalms Sonnets and Songs of Sadness and Piety*, *Songs of Sundry Natures*, and *Psalms Songs and Sonnets*, besides some detached madrigals and anthems and instrumental pieces; three masses, the numerous pieces in the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book', and various other works are also available in modern editions, but a considerable amount remains still in manuscript.

Byrd's juniors, Thomas Morley and Orlando Gibbons, were musicians of very nearly equal fame and versatility. Morley was born in 1557 or 1558 and died in 1602, or perhaps a little later; he was a pupil of Byrd, and was a gentleman of the Chapel Royal from 1592 to his death, having previously held the office of organist at St. Paul's Cathedral. His compositions include several books of Canzonets, Madrigals, Ballets, and songs with accompaniment, together with anthems and services



for church use, and instrumental music of all kinds ; he edited various collections of vocal and instrumental music, the most notable being the set of madrigals known as *The Triumphs of Oriana*,<sup>1</sup> and also published in 1597 the first regular theoretical treatise ever issued in England, under the title of 'A Plain and easy Introduction to Practical Music'. In 1598 he obtained a fresh patent for the exclusive printing of music-books, that granted to Tallis and Byrd having lapsed.

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) was the son of one of the Waits or town musicians of Cambridge, and was the younger brother of two other musicians, Edward Gibbons being successively organist of King's College, Cambridge, Bristol and Exeter Cathedrals, and Ellis Gibbons contributing two madrigals to the *Oriana* collection while organist at the Cathedral of Salisbury. Orlando was a pupil of his eldest brother at Cambridge, and was subsequently organist of the Chapel Royal and of Westminster Abbey ; he died suddenly at Canterbury, whither he had travelled in connexion with the festivities for the reception of the Queen of Charles I, and was buried in the Cathedral. Gibbons was a less prolific composer than Byrd or Morley, and comparatively little work remains now in manuscript ; his music includes services, anthems, and hymn-tunes, a collection of 'madrigals and motets', three-part Fantasies for viols, and dances and other pieces for the virginals.

The other notable composers of the time were less versatile, and devoted their energies more exclusively to one or two departments. Many gave themselves more or less completely to the writing of madrigals ; as a rule, however, we have but scanty details of their biographies. All, for example, we know of the personality of John Wilbye, one of the greatest, is that he was a Londoner by residence ; of John Bennet, as of John Ward, we know literally nothing except the music. Thomas Bateson (died 1630) was successively cathedral organist at Chester and Dublin, and seems to have been the first musical graduate of Trinity College, Dublin ; Thomas Weelkes (died 1623) was organist of Winchester and Chichester Cathedrals. John Farmer seems to have been a predecessor

<sup>1</sup> See later, p. 60.

of Bateson in the Dublin organistship: George Kirbye (died 1634) was a native of Suffolk; John Mundy (son of the William Mundy mentioned in the preceding chapter) was organist of Eton College and afterwards Merbecke's successor at St. George's Chapel, Windsor; John Hilton the elder, lay-clerk and assistant organist at Lincoln Cathedral, was afterwards organist of Trinity College, Cambridge; Michael Este was perhaps the son of Thomas Este, by whom, as assignee first of Byrd and afterwards of Morley, much of the most important music of the time was published; Richard Carlton was a resident of Norwich; Thomas Tomkins (son of a similarly-named contributor to the *Oriana* collection) was a pupil of Byrd, and organist successively of Worcester Cathedral and the Chapel Royal—meagre details like these represent the sum of our knowledge of the lives of men among the most distinguished musicians of the time. Most of them seem to have written nothing but madrigals, though a certain quantity of ecclesiastical music from the pens of Wilbye, Weelkes, Bateson, Ward, Tomkins, and one or two more, is in existence; others, while also confining themselves principally to secular vocal music, turned their attention rather to accompanied songs, and were, as a general rule, lutenists. The chief of these was John Dowland (1563–1626), who would seem (though the evidence is not conclusive) to have been an Irishman; he started life in the service of the English Ambassador at Paris, and subsequently travelled extensively in Germany and Italy. From 1598 to 1606 he was chief lutenist to the King of Denmark; and in 1612, after some years of obscurity in England, he was appointed 'second musician to the Lutes' at the court of James I. Other composers of more or less the same tendencies were Thomas Ford (c. 1580–1648)—all of whose known works seem to have been written comparatively early in his life; Francis Pilkington, a native of Chester (who produced two sets of 'Madrigals and Pastorals' in addition to the 'Ayres' by which he is now almost exclusively known); Robert Johnson,<sup>1</sup> one of the court lutenists to both James I and Charles I, and specially known as the composer of the music at the first

<sup>1</sup> Apparently no relation to the musician of the same name mentioned in the last chapter.



performances of *The Tempest* and other famous plays; John Cooper (who, after a temporary residence in Italy, altered his name to Coperario), the master of the two brothers Lawes; William Corkine, Thomas Greaves, Robert Jones, Philip Rosseter, and Thomas Campion (1575–1619), a physician by profession, and a poet of very high distinction, who published several books of vocal music with lute accompaniment (one in conjunction with Rosseter), as well as songs for masques and a treatise on counterpoint.

Others again there were who, though occasionally diverging into other fields, devoted themselves mainly to ecclesiastical work. Among them were John Milton (died 1647), whose musical abilities were celebrated by his great son in a Latin poem; he was a contributor to the *Oriana* collection, but chiefly set religious words. Adrian Batten (died 1637) connected successively, as boy and man, with Winchester Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral; Richard Patrick, lay vicar of Westminster Abbey from 1616 to about 1625; Edmund Hooper, organist of the same from 1606 till his death in 1621; Elway Bevin, a pupil of Tallis, and organist of Bristol Cathedral and gentleman of the Chapel Royal; Richard Deering (died 1630), many of whose works were published abroad; William Damon, one of the Court musicians to Queen Elizabeth; and Thomas Ravenscroft, a graduate of Cambridge—all wrote chiefly services, motets, or anthems, though Bevin and Ravenscroft were also theoretical writers and composers of a considerable quantity of secular music, and the latter was further known as editor of both secular and ecclesiastical collections.

John Bull (c. 1562–1628), on the other hand, was, first and above all, an instrumental composer, his vocal writings (all ecclesiastical in character) being apparently very few in number; he held organist's posts at Hereford Cathedral and the Chapel Royal, but was chiefly famous as a writer for the virginals, on which he was a performer of astonishing virtuosity. In 1613 he quitted England for the Netherlands and in 1617 was appointed organist of Antwerp Cathedral, a post that he retained till his death. Giles Farnaby, a Cornishman by race, seems also to have been most distinguished as a composer

of music for the virginals, though he wrote canzonets and other vocal work besides; John Okeover (who was appointed organist of Wells Cathedral in 1619) is exclusively known by his music for viols.

The religious changes of the times caused the emigration of many English Catholics, among whom was Peter Philipps, one of the most prominent of Elizabethan composers; he was an ecclesiastic who spent nearly all his life in the Netherlands, publishing a large quantity of madrigals and religious motets. He was generally known either by the Latin or the Italian versions of his name, and his music seems to have been but slightly familiar to his contemporaries in England; the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book' (which was, as a matter of fact, transcribed by another Catholic refugee) contains a considerable number of instrumental compositions by him. The dates of his birth and death are not known, but his last works were published in 1633, when he cannot well have been less than seventy, as instrumental music dated 1580 exists. Counterbalancing, however, to some extent the virtual denationalization of Philipps, the two Ferraboscis, both called Alfonso, have, to all intents and purposes, to be reckoned as English musicians; the elder was the son of a musician of Bologna, but seems to have come to England at an early age. He remained in the service of Queen Elizabeth (though with occasional periods of residence abroad) till 1578, when he removed, apparently without the Queen's permission, to take a post under the Duke of Savoy at Turin, where he died in 1588. He was familiarly known in England as 'Master Alfonso', and enjoyed an exceptional reputation; his madrigals, though published in Italy, were reproduced in English collections, and large quantities of his manuscripts exist in English libraries. His son (c. 1575-1626) was exclusively an Englishman, and was one of the chief court musicians under both James I and Charles I; he frequently collaborated with Ben Jonson, whose intimate friend he was, and left behind him a large quantity of instrumental music and songs. His three sons, the last of whom died as organist of Ely Cathedral in 1682, carried the musical reputation of the family into the fourth generation.

With the defeat of the Armada in 1588 the danger of



religious upheaval passed away from England ; and musicians turned with a curious suddenness, and with almost complete unanimity, to follow secular ideals. Since 1530 only one collection of non-ecclesiastical music had been printed—a book of songs for three, four, and five voices composed by one Thomas Whythorne and issued in 1571<sup>1</sup>: but between 1587 and 1630 no fewer than eighty-eight vocal collections, containing altogether between fifteen hundred and two thousand pieces, nearly all secular in character, were published in part-books, and many more still remain in manuscript. Religious music was not indeed neglected, but for the time it was virtually altogether overshadowed ; as a contemporary writer<sup>2</sup> says, Boccaccio was more generally attractive than the Bible, and the increase in luxury, combined with the flood of new interest in literature and the drama, rapidly brought about a condition of things in which music, even in its noblest aspects, was primarily regarded as an after-dinner recreation for persons of culture. A well-known passage in Morley's *Plain and Easy Introduction* certainly implies, if taken at all literally, that inability to sing at sight from part-books was regarded as a sign of extremely deficient education<sup>3</sup>; and, anyhow, there is no doubt that there was a very great general interest in musical matters, and that the capacity for vocal and instrumental performance was very widely diffused. To a large extent this enthusiasm owed its germs to foreign influences, and especially to those emanating from Italy, a country that was being more and more brought into close literary and artistic relations with England ; and it is to Italy that we primarily owe the development of our madrigals, perhaps on the whole the greatest musical treasure we possess, though its glory lasted only some thirty years.

As we have seen, concerted vocal music was written to secular words by Englishmen of earlier times, but it is not

<sup>1</sup> These very rare part-books are worth a cursory glance, as showing (as we are sometimes inclined to forget) that downright bad music could be written in the sixteenth century ; Whythorne's songs are as miserably feeble rubbish as can well be imagined.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Nagel, ii. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Peacham, in his *Complete Gentleman*, says, 'I desire no more in you than to sing or play your part sure and at the first sight.'

till towards the close of the sixteenth century that the English madrigal proper makes its appearance. It is a combination of two elements originally totally separate, the contrapuntal secular music of the Italians and their resident masters of Netherlandish blood, and the harmonic Italian quasi-popular songs, the 'Frottole' and such-like, of which numerous examples were published in the earlier part of the century. All the English madrigal-writers show both the contrapuntal and the harmonic elements in their works, and indeed generally combine them in the same composition; there is not that steady and purely unemotional contrapuntal interlacing which robs the older Netherlandish madrigals, exquisitely beautiful though they mostly are, of the necessary secularity of manner, nor is there that rather uninteresting and elementary method of harmonizing chord by chord which soon causes the Frottole to pall on the reader or listener. Even in the subsidiary form of madrigals known as Ballets or Fa las, where the markedly rhythmical element is especially prominent, and the whole tendency is in the direction of plainly melodic swing, there is still an attention to the delicate shades of individual part-writing which, even if there were not (as there usually are) occasional contrapuntal passages, would prevent us from regarding them merely as harmonized tunes. If we like to say so, the English madrigal is an artistic compromise, of astonishing perfection and success; the later Italians were aiming in the same direction, but in a very few years we had easily distanced them.

The first madrigals published in England<sup>1</sup> were due to the enterprise of an amateur music-lover named Nicholas Yonge, who had procured copies from the continent and had daily performances in his private house; in 1588 he brought out fifty-seven of the best Italian and Italianized Netherlandish composers, to English translations, with the addition of two by Byrd. Twenty-four more were published by him nine years later, and in the meantime others had been issued under different auspices: but this interest in foreign works was quickly swamped by the flood of native madrigals that began

<sup>1</sup> If we exclude Byrd's mixed collection of 'Psalms, Sonnets, and Songs,' published in 1587.



to pour from the press. The most famous of these publications was that known as *The Triumphs of Oriana*, which was edited by Morley, and issued in 1601; this is a collection of twenty-seven madrigals by nearly all the most distinguished English composers of the time (with the addition of one by Giovanni Croce in translated form), and was modelled on a slightly earlier Italian collection entitled *Il Trionfo di Dori*, to which Palestrina, Marenzio, and others had contributed. The poems, which are of no sort of special literary value, are intended as compliments to Queen Elizabeth (Oriana is the name of the heroine in the romance of Amadis of Gaul); in later editions, brought out after her death, some extra madrigals, with suitably altered sentiments, were included.

Many collections of madrigals and similar music have on the title-page the words 'apt for voices or viols' (even when, as in Byrd's 'Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets' of 1611, the title-page also specially remarks that the music is 'framed to the life of the words'); and, strange as it appears to us, there is no doubt that the compositions of Wilbye and Morley, and all the rest, were often played as purely instrumental pieces. As they were invariably published in separate part-books, there was no sort of practical difficulty about such a proceeding, and indeed in many cases the words are printed in so casual and incomplete a fashion as to suggest that, even when they were sung, the singer was allowed a very free hand. Haphazard methods like these (and, as we shall shortly see, they were not confined to madrigals) no doubt strike us as grossly inartistic: but we must not forget the essentially private and so to speak amateur character of such music in older days. It was, exclusively, the recreation of artistically minded friends who were quite willing, if a work could not be performed in one way, to do it in any other rather than go without their pleasure; ideal considerations affected them no more than they affect to-day any small handful of music-lovers gathered together behind closed doors. The madrigals are rarely now sung with solo voices, but as a matter of fact secular choral music was totally unknown in England till the Purcellian epoch; the ecclesiastical compositions themselves were in all probability never performed by more than a very few voices

to a part, and post-Reformation works written to Latin words, like Byrd's *Cantiones Sacrae*, were no doubt (except in a private Catholic chapel here and there) sung, just as the madrigals were, by a few friends sitting round a table.

Under such conditions there was no practical need for differentiation of vocal style; but gradually it came to be recognized that certain effects could be obtained by the use of solo voices which were not equally agreeable when the parts were doubled or more. About the beginning of the seventeenth century the solo-singer as such makes his first appearance in musical history; till then every one who took part in a performance felt himself an equal sharer in the whole, but now a particular individual feels himself virtually the whole, and the rest is 'accompaniment'. It is the entrance, fraught with all sorts of dire results, of the element of subordination into art; but it is also the beginning of conscious (not, as in folk-music, virtually unconscious) personal expression, and of emotional subtleties impossible in concerted work—at any rate the ground was prepared for such developments, though they were some considerable time in coming.

Caccini's solo songs with instrumental accompaniment, which are usually regarded as the earliest ventures in the new field, appeared in 1602: but a year previously two books of exclusively solo 'Ayres'<sup>1</sup>—the one by Jones (whose preface asserts it to be the first of its kind), the other half by Campion and half by Rosseter—had been published in England, and though Caccini's works seem to have been previously circulated both in and out of Italy in manuscript copies, yet we need not relinquish our claim to priority. Indeed, Rosseter's preface asserts that Campion's songs 'made at his vacant hours' had been for some time 'privately emparked to his friends, whereby they grew both publicke, and (as coin crackt in exchange) corrupted; some of them both words and notes unrespectively challenged by others'. They were not the first 'Ayres' published in England; but the earlier sets of Dowland (1597 and 1600), Morley (1600), and Jones himself

<sup>1</sup> Most historians retain the old spelling; 'airs' connotes, as will be seen, a largely different set of ideas.



(1600), were not, as these were, specifically designed throughout for a solo singer with accompaniment.

All these Ayres differ from Madrigals in the essential respect that they have an instrumental support, while the latter were always intended to be sung unaccompanied; though the term is not, however, quite exclusively so used, as Weelkes' 'Ayres or Fantastic Spirits' and the younger Hilton's 'Ayres or Fa Las' have no accompaniment, and rank practically as Madrigals. The Madrigals are also printed in separate part-books, but the Ayres in one volume with all the various parts, vocal and instrumental, facing different ways on two adjacent pages, so that the performers may sit round a small table and all be able to read their music more or less conveniently; as a rule, however, the uppermost vocal part is printed with the lute accompaniment annexed, so that these two could be combined by one performer. The Madrigals, again, are invariably unbarred; while in the Ayres the tune-part and the lute accompaniment are barred more or less regularly<sup>1</sup>, while the other parts, vocal and instrumental, are as a general rule left without bars. The first named difference is, however, the chief; and it seems quite certain that, in singing 'Awake, sweet love' or 'Since first I saw your face' unaccompanied, we do violence to their composers' intentions. Many sets—for example, besides those already named, Ferrabosco's set of 1609, the third and fourth books of Campion (1617), and others—contain none but solo songs; and where there are four voice parts printed, the composers indicate, most charitably, numerous ways in which the music can be sung, but seem always to omit to say that it can be performed unaccompanied. The title-page of the first and well-known book of Dowland's 'Songs or Ayres' tells us that they are 'so made that all the partes together, or either of them severally, may be sung to the Lute, Orpherian, or Viol de Gambo'; which obviously implies, strange as it seems to us, that the composer contemplated the possibility of, say, the alto part being sung by itself with nothing but the viola da

<sup>1</sup> Rosseter bars his music throughout in the strict modern way; the others are more casual as regards the length of the bars, which now, and indeed for long afterwards, were regarded not as a substitute for the time-signature, but merely as a general help to the eye.

gamba part (in single notes) for accompaniment. Jones' first book of Ayres has an exactly similar title-page, and Campion's 'Divine and Morall Ayres' and 'Light Conceits of Lovers' are described as 'with accompaniment in 2, 3, and 4 parts; or by one voice to an instrument'; while in Jones' 'Musicall Dreame' 'The First part is for the Lute, two Voyces, and the Viole de Gamba; The Second part is for the Lute, the Viole, and foure Voices to Sing; The Third part is for one Voyce alone, or to the Lute, the Basse Viole, or to both if you please'—where apparently one voice might be allowed to sing entirely unaccompanied. But still the fact remains that nowadays we have singularly little chance of hearing this music except in unaccompanied chorus or with pianoforte; and after all it is better perhaps that we should enjoy it thus illegitimately than not at all.

Sometimes the same publication includes both Ayres and Madrigals or religious Motets, in which case the parts of the latter are printed facing different ways, all unbarred. The chief example of this is the collection issued in 1614 of fifty-three 'Tears or Lamentations of a Sorrowful Soul' made by Sir William Leighton, one of the court band of Gentlemen Pensioners, during a period of imprisonment for debt; eight were written by himself, and the remaining forty-five by Byrd, Gibbons, Dowland, Milton, Johnson, Ford, Hooper, Kindersley, Gyles, Coperario, Bull, Pilkington, Lupo, Jones, Peerson, Weelkes, Ward, Wilbye, Ferrabosco, and Timolphus Thopull. There are seventeen 'Consort Songs,' 'the Cantus with the Treble Violl and Tablature for the Lute, the Altus with a Flute and Tablature for the Citterne, the Tenor with Tablature for the Bandora, and the Bassus with a Bass Violl'; the remaining numbers consist of twelve songs in four parts and twenty-four in five, all being of the nature of madrigals save in so far as the words are of a religious character.

It is also not at all uncommon to find instrumental pieces included in the vocal publications. Many of these are found in the volumes of Ayres, and consist of pieces for the lute; the Ayres of Tobias Hume contain several curious attempts at realistic programme-music for this most retiring of instruments. Byrd's 'Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets' contain two



'Fantasias' for viols, one in four and one in six parts; Este's Madrigals (1610) have several more, and other similar collections now and then show isolated specimens.

Even in the purely ecclesiastical music itself the new ideas are very visible in the frequent appearance of 'verse' anthems and services containing portions for solo voices and independent instrumental accompaniments—features entirely unknown in previous times. There seems, indeed, no doubt that the 'full' anthems and services which are now sung unaccompanied were formerly supported all through by viols in unison and also by organ, at any rate so far as the top and bottom parts and the chief 'leads' of the others were concerned: but towards the end of the century we find evidences of a partiality for more varying colour. The researcher among contemporary MSS. will meet not infrequently with arrangements of the older choral music, such as an adaptation of Tallis' well-known 'I call and cry' ('O sacrum convivium') 'for two countertenors, to the organs'; sometimes the verse-anthems show the solo voices entering vaguely every now and then in alternation with the full portions, sometimes there are definitely contrasted sections of equal importance, and sometimes (as in Tomkins' 'Through thee will we overthrow our enemies') the work is designed for one solo voice 'to the organs', with a little, and quite subordinate, chorus work—Morley's 'Out of the deep' is indeed found in more than one form, and no doubt considerable latitude was allowed. Anyhow, there was no differentiation of technique, and the instruments and voices performed exactly the same kind of music; certain wind instruments were in fairly common use, but there seems no evidence at this period for the employment of either oboes or trumpets, which were thought to conflict with the quiet and dignified tone that was universally preferred before the invasion of French taste under Charles II. It seems certain, however, that the solo singers habitually introduced ornamentation not written by the composer; and this custom, though kept well within artistic bounds for some time, was obviously open to grave abuse.

The authorship of the poetry—often of exquisite beauty—which all these composers set is never directly named; and

the absence of any real evidence forbids us to assert dogmatically, as is often done, that the same men wrote both words and music. We know, indeed, from the already-quoted preface to the Rosseter-Campion book of 1601, that Campion set his own poetry; but there is nothing whatever to tell us the authorship of the songs set by Rosseter. Campion, who published poetry apart from his Ayres, may very probably have always set his own verses; but we have no direct evidence about any one else, and the fact that Jones, in the preface to his first book, apologizes for the 'idle ditties' need not at all necessarily imply that he wrote them himself. Exactly the same problem faces us with regard to the madrigals, though, as a rule, the poetry of these is not of such exceptional lyrical merit; and all we can do is to point, on the one hand, to a case like that of Campion, and on the other to the occasional instances of the same words being set by different composers, and the occasional occurrence of poetry which we know to be by Shakespeare or Spenser or Marlowe or Jonson or Sidney or Raleigh. No doubt the matter never caused any trouble to music-lovers then or for long afterwards; and even now how often is the authorship of the words of a song mentioned on a concert-programme?

The Elizabethan age saw also the first beginnings of English stage music. Morley set several Shakespearean songs; and Robert Johnson, the lutenist, wrote the music for *The Tempest* and for the incantation scene in *Macbeth*, as well as various other pieces for plays of Fletcher and Ben Jonson. In many plays, both tragedies and comedies, there is a good deal of incidental music necessary; and the Masque, an offshoot from the main dramatic movement, attracted much attention from the half-amateur composers like Campion and Coperario and the younger Ferrabosco, many of whose most charming songs were written for such works. However, the Masques did not reach their full artistic development till the next period, though from the start they foreshadowed the future opera in the important place which they assigned to vocal music.

A considerable number of composers of this period were further distinguished as the writers of theoretical works. Morley's elaborate and still very interesting *Plain and Easy*



*Introduction to Practical Music*, which first appeared, with a dedication to Byrd, in 1597, is written in the form of a conversation between two pupils and a master; it consists of three parts, dealing respectively with notation and sight-singing, counterpoint, and general composition, and also contains valuable lists of authorities, both theorists and composers. Still more historically important is Campion's treatise on counterpoint, published some twenty years later; this, though less practical than Morley's, is considerably more modern in tendency, and was in great request during the Restoration period. Ravenscroft's *Brief Discourse of Mensurable Music*, and Dowland's translation of Ornithoparcus' *Micrologus* (one of the most famous of continental treatises), also deserve mention as showing the interest taken in scientific questions by composers, even when, as in the case of Dowland, their own work was chiefly in the lighter vein. Henry Peacham, a pupil of the celebrated Italian madrigalist Orazio Vecchi, is unknown as a composer save for one work written, in honour of James I, as a supplement to the *Oriana* collection; but his *Complete Gentleman* (1622) contains numerous interesting references to, and criticisms of, contemporary musicians.

Only a comparatively small quantity of instrumental music was published during the madrigalian era; but several of the collections of vocal music include, as we have seen, a few instrumental pieces; and, as has already been noted, the madrigals might be played on viols. The two most important publications were Gibbons' three-part *Fantasies for viols* (1609) and 'Parthenia', the joint work of Byrd, Bull, and Gibbons, and the earliest printed music for the virginals; this was probably issued in 1611, and was reprinted in 1613 and subsequently. Morley's 'Consort Lessons' (1599), consisting of twenty-three pieces for 'the Treble Lute, the Pandora, the Citterne, the Base-Violl, the Flute, and the Treble Violl,' may be taken as a specimen of the rest of the instrumental music that issued from the press; but our MS. authorities are, at any rate so far as virginal music is concerned, much more valuable. Various MSS. in the British Museum and Buckingham Palace, and 'Lady

Nevill's Book' at Eridge Castle, contain large quantities of virginal music by Byrd, Bull, Gibbons, and others; but our chief source is the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book' at Cambridge, which has been recently printed for the first time. This collection of 291 pieces was made by a member of a Cornish Catholic family of the name of Tregian, which, owing to religious difficulties, emigrated to the Netherlands; the title of 'Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book' given by Hawkins is without the least warrant, and, indeed, the dates in the MS., several of which are later than 1603, are convincing in themselves, apart from external evidence. The composers represented are Tallis, Byrd, Philipps, Parsons, Hooper, Stogers, Harding, Mundy, E. Johnson, Peerson, Tomkins, Farnaby, Bull, Richardson, Warrock, Tisdall, Oldfield, Inglott, and a few foreigners such as Sweelinck; several of the pieces are, however, mere transcriptions of madrigals by Marenzio and others.

English instrumentalists and instrumental compositions seem to have been well known abroad, especially in Germany. English dance-tunes had been published at Breslau as early as 1555; and about the beginning of the seventeenth century numerous pieces by various Englishmen, attached as violists or lutenists to foreign courts or settled in foreign towns, saw the light at Hamburg, Frankfort, Utrecht, Nuremberg, Lübeck, Berlin, and elsewhere. There seems, indeed, considerable reason for supposing that these composers, artistically unimportant in themselves though they are, did much to pave the way for the work of great men like Scheidt and Sweelinck, and for their still greater successors; in a certain sense, we may call these wandering Englishmen the fathers of instrumental music. The Thirty Years' War, however, put a final stop to this intercourse; the English municipal violists at Dantzic in 1637 were probably the last of their race.<sup>1</sup>

A few words may be said concerning the now obsolete instruments for which Elizabethan composers wrote.

The virginal or virginals<sup>2</sup> was strictly a spinet, usually of

<sup>1</sup> Davey, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> The plural form was in common use for keyed instruments; similarly we find 'the organs.'

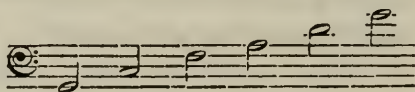


quadrangular shape ('Queen Elizabeth's Virginal' is pentangular), and of an easily portable character, so as to be played while lying on a table; however, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the term was sometimes vaguely used to describe other keyed instruments, such as harpsichords, single or double—all, however, agreeing in the feature that the strings (unlike those in the clavichord and the pianoforte) were set in motion by a plucking action. The virginal was specially popular in England, and was the favourite instrument for young ladies; probably its name was derived from this fact, but it has also (though less plausibly) been supposed that it is due to instrumental accompaniments to hymns to the Virgin Mary being performed upon it. The term gradually fell into disuse towards the end of the seventeenth century, being superseded by the generic 'spinet'; and still later the improved harpsichord ousted the less powerful instrument altogether.

Viols were the universal bowed instruments, violins being hardly known in England till the time of Charles II, when French influences made themselves felt. They differed in certain principles of construction from the modern violin family (which includes the viola and violoncello as well as the violin itself), and had from five to seven strings, tuned, not in fifths, but in fourths and thirds; there were four sizes—the treble or discant viol, the tenor 'viola da braccio', the bass 'viola da gamba,' and the double bass 'violone', which is now the only one in regular use, but was formerly seldom employed. As a general rule trio music was rendered by six players, the parts being doubled in loud passages; the expression 'a chest of viols', with which we frequently meet, implies a complete set of the three chief varieties.

Instruments of the lute species were in general use. The ordinary lute had, with subsidiary others, six chief strings, tuned in England (continental customs varied) as follows—





No. 21.



The plucking was done with the fingers of the right hand, those of the left being engaged in stopping the strings, which

No. 22.

		a													
a	e		c	e	a	e	d		a	d	c	e		f	e
	f		d	b	f		f	d b	a		f	e	f		
c				e		e		a			e	e			
	c	a		c		c	c		e	c				c	
a			d	c	a						c				

							
c	a	a					a
a	b	d	c	a	d	c	a
a	d	b	a	d	b	a	e
a	c	c	a	c	a	c	f
a	d	c	e	c	a	c	e
		d	c	f	a	d	a

At a later page will be found a translation of this into ordinary notes. The letters represent rising semitones on each string, 'a' being the open note ; the superimposed signs indicate the time values from a minim to a semiquaver, each sign being supposed to remain in force until contradicted—though, as this example will show, this rule was not strictly observed in cases where there was no real chance of a mistake.<sup>1</sup> There were other instruments of the same general character but differing in details ; among these were the cithern and its variants, the pandora (or bandora) and the orphereon—all of which differed from the lute in the fact that, having no 'chanterelle' or melody string, they could only be used for accompaniments. There was also the theorbo or double-necked 'archlute,' which was in the seventeenth century frequently used, as an alternative to a keyed instrument, in supplying the chords of a figured bass ; it remained in artistic use later than any other member of its family, and is found in the scores of Handel's first two oratorios and other contemporary works.

<sup>1</sup> Similar tablature was sometimes used for viola da gamba music; this 'lyra' or 'lero way' method is chiefly found in the latter part of the seventeenth century.



We may now enter on an examination of the actual music left us, either in manuscript or in print, by the composers of this period. Turning first of all to the ecclesiastical music, we are immediately met by the towering figure of Byrd, whose religious compositions include masses, Latin motets of various shapes and sizes (the *Cantiones Sacrae* and *Gradualia*), and a quantity of work with English words—psalms, anthems, carols, &c.—contained in the three mixed sacred and secular collections of ‘Psalms, Sonnets and Songs of Sadness and Piety’, ‘Songs of Sundry Natures’ and ‘Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets’. The three Masses<sup>1</sup> are respectively in three, four, and five parts; they probably were written at about the same period,<sup>2</sup> and they differ singularly little in quality, the considerable differences that they show being exclusively due to the relatively more or less complex structures. Thus the three-voice mass is necessarily the simplest in texture and scope; Byrd secures, it is true, a variety of expression and a continually shifting play of vocal colour that are quite astonishing in view of his slender material, but the work aims throughout primarily at grace, not at strength—and indeed nothing could be more tender and serene than the exquisite *Agnus Dei*, the beginning of which may be quoted as an example of Byrd’s mastery both in technique and in feeling—

No. 23.  
(Moderately slow)

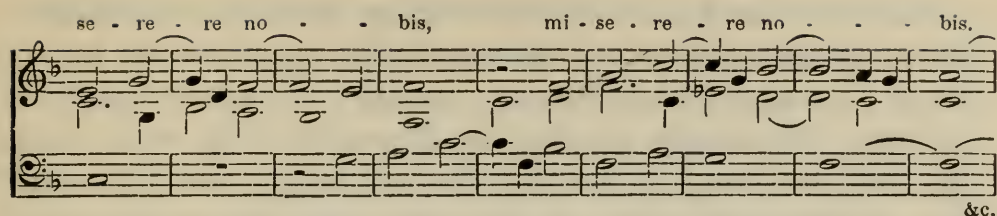
Ag - nus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta

[sempre p]

mun - di, mi - se - re - re no - bis, mi -

<sup>1</sup> All three, and also the complete ‘Songs of Sundry Natures’, have been recently reprinted, but a vast amount of Byrd’s music still remains buried in the original part-books or in manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Rimbault assigned a very early date to the five-voice mass, but his assertion is quite unsupported, and the internal evidence plainly points to the work being of its composer’s mature period.

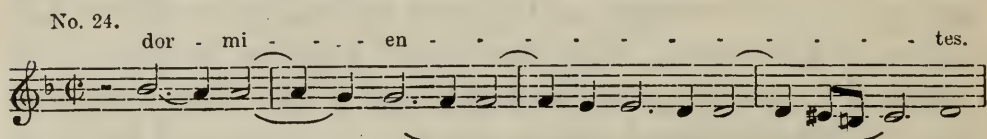


The four-voice mass is designed on more grandiose lines. Not, indeed, that it yields to its slighter companion in delicacy of expression—the wonderfully pathetic setting (in the *Gloria*) of the words ‘Fili unigenite Iesu Christe’ or the perfect last page of all, where the music fades away in long-drawn peaceful harmonies, are full evidence of that; but the bulk of the *Gloria*, and especially the first part of the *Sanctus*, show a more powerful touch than anything in the three-voice mass. The extra part of the five-voice mass gives Byrd still more opportunity for elaboration of method; music like the splendid setting of the *Incarnatus* or the very noble *Sanctus* shows him in his largest mood. The three rank together as, beyond all conceivable question, the finest settings of the Mass that exist from an English hand; they are not so suave and broad as the work of Palestrina, but they are somehow more human and personal, and show, like all Byrd’s great work, a strangely fascinating mixture of ruggedness and tenderness.

In the nature of the case, however, the words of the Mass do not afford Byrd, intimate though their appeal is to him, the opportunities for the display of his versatile genius so much as his other religious works, which vary considerably in scope and manner. Sometimes, as in the ‘Turbare voces’, from the later set of the *Gradualia*, he attempts definite drama, and produces a curious little collection of tiny movements; but in this line Byrd, with his essentially reflective genius and his natural fondness for spacious contrapuntal design, met with no success at all. Not, indeed, that he could not be dramatic when the occasion arose—dramatic, that is to say, after a style that is carefully welded with the character of the work as a whole; one of the very finest passages in one of Byrd’s greatest masterpieces—the superbly festal and ringing six-part anthem known as ‘Sing joyfully unto God’—paints the trumpet at the words ‘Blow the trumpet in the new moon’



in a gorgeously up and down surging passage consisting of four-and-a-half  $\frac{4}{2}$  bars on the chord of F major, half a bar on that of C major, and three bars on that of G major, and the less-known but nearly equally fine five-part 'Sing we merrily unto God our strength' (in the 'Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets') has a very similar though less extended effect. But such definite pictorialism, sustained for so long, is rare in Byrd's works, though it is true that he is fond of momentary word-painting of a quaintly suggestive character; we may notice, for example, how in the *cantio sacra* 'Posuerunt morticinia' the movement becomes more animated at the reference to the 'fowls of the air', or remark in 'Effuderunt sanguinem' the realistic setting of 'in circuitu Ierusalem', or in 'Vigilate' (No. 16 of the first book of *Cantiones Sacrae*) the suddenness and excitement of the treatment of the word 'repente' or the drowsiness of 'dormientes'—



But quaintnesses like these—more common with Latin than with English words—never for a moment mar the dignified flow of these works, the best of which (and their general level is exceptionally high) are among the very finest music of the austere noble kind that England, or any other country for that matter, has ever produced. It so happens that Boyce's versions of 'Ne irascaris, Domine', with its second part 'Civitas sancti tui', as 'O Lord, turn thy wrath' and 'Bow thine ear' have made these particular numbers more familiar to cathedral-goers than the rest of the collection from which they come; but exceedingly fine as they are, they are far from standing alone. Byrd has a very remarkable capacity for pathos, as is especially noticeable in such motets as 'Sed tu, Domine' (the second part of 'Tristitia et anxietas'), or 'Vide, Domine, afflictionem' and its second part 'Sed veni, Domine', or the extraordinarily impressive (though only three-voice) 'From depth of sin' in the 'Songs of Sundry Natures'; yet 'O quam gloriosum', in pure and bright major throughout, is equally successful in its realization of the joyful serenity of its words,

'Laetantur coeli' is overwhelmingly vigorous in emotion, the six-part setting of the versified 121st Psalm in the 'Songs of Sundry Natures' secures, by continual recurrence to the same kinds of chords and phrases, an effect of wonderfully rich and warm placidness, and the anthem from the later set of *Gradualia* recently republished as 'I will not leave you comfortless' runs through the whole gamut of happiness up to its soaringly triumphant last page. Indeed, there is perhaps no English music of greater or more lasting attractiveness; the occasional spice of old-world quaintness only adds a pleasant flavour, and the range of expression is, when the limitations of the medium are remembered, altogether extraordinary. Subtleties of style that we usually associate with far more modern days meet us at every turn; just as an example, we may quote the beautiful passage in 'Domine, tu iurasti', where the austere sombre music suddenly softens and sweetens at the idea of the 'land flowing with milk and honey'—

No. 25.

[Moderately slow]

ter - ram flu - en - tem lac - te et mel -

- le, &amp;c.

As a rule, Byrd seems to have required for the full flow of



his religious inspiration a certain amount of, so to speak, pomp and circumstance; it is with some difficulty that he unbends to handle smaller things, the touch is often less sure and the fire burns less clearly. The carols are among the best; the well-known five-part 'Lullaby'—one of its composer's loveliest things, and indeed one of the most exquisitely tender and delicate blossoms in all music—is a recurrent chorus to a Christmas carol that forms one of the 'Songs of Sadness and Piety', and No. 35 of the 'Songs of Sundry Natures' shows another somewhat similar example, with a carol for solo treble voice on a tune the rhythm and balanced cadences of which suggest a folk-song origin, accompanied by four viols, and alternating with a very charming choral refrain for four trebles together. But, on the whole, if we wish to see Byrd's noble genius at its highest, we must take compositions where there is ample space for its expression; miniature-work was not, as a rule, congenial to it—nor, as a matter of fact, was contrapuntal ingenuity such as is shown in the technically amazing but not otherwise interesting eight-part *recte et retro* canon 'Diliges Dominum Deum', from the second book of the *Cantiones Sacrae*, about which (as about Tallis' not dissimilar works) far too much has been written.

We may now turn to the church music of Gibbons, the other outstanding figure of the time in this particular field; his primary difference from Byrd is that he owes nothing directly to Roman influences, but stands before us as virtually the father of pure Anglican music. Tallis and others had, indeed, sometimes sacrificed artistic convictions in order to enable the words to be clearly heard by every listener; but then they fell back on the old traditional Latin, and repaid themselves by purely contrapuntal works. Gibbons was the first of the really great men to adopt, in musical matters, the sort of *via media* which the Anglican Church has always so much favoured; his famous service in F cannot be said to pay any special attention to requirements of clearness in the words, as the writing is quite freely imitative, but, on the other hand, he set nothing but his native language, and his music shows none of that sort of mystical austerity that has always been typical of composers under Roman influences,

and is plainly notable in Tallis, Tye, Whyte, and Byrd alike. He was an English artist, and nothing more; and as such he is one of our glories. Though he never reaches the same depths of etherealized tenderness and mystic sublimity as Byrd, he has, perhaps, more variety of style; and his easy mastery over all his material enabled him to succeed brilliantly in anything he touched. The service in F just mentioned is, indeed, perhaps the most 'foursquare without blame' of all Anglican services; finely massive from start to finish, melodious and yet perfectly strong, technically polished and yet never dry, it very worthily holds its pre-eminent place in the roll of church music. And yet Gibbons—differing sharply in this matter from Byrd—is hardly completely at home with purely ritual words like those of a service; his art demands for its full exercise something more individualized, something with a bearing on human emotion. And so we see him at his greatest in anthems like 'Hosanna to the Son of David', or 'Lift up your heads', or 'O clap your hands', the words of which forcibly suggest action and movement; and, though in a totally different mood, the whole feeling of the solemn yet lovely 'Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a span long' is similarly essentially personal and direct. Magnificent works like these take rank side by side with the masterpieces of the older men; if they lack something of the high aloofness, they add expressive colour. Taken at its proper speed,<sup>1</sup> 'Hosanna to the Son of David' sounds like a peal of bells—

No. 26.

[Quick and jubilant]

Ho - san - na to the son of Da - vid, &c.

(f) I. II. III. IV. V. VI. &c.

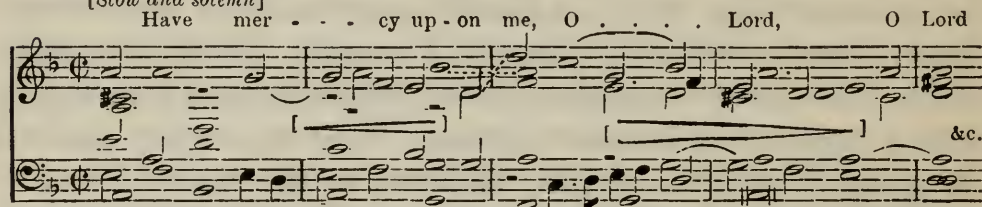
<sup>1</sup> The slow pace at which this gorgeously brilliant work is too often sung quite robs it of its joyous swing.



and similarly 'Lift up your heads' and 'O clap your hands' (especially its second part 'God is gone up') are charged through and through with vitality. All the details are flawless, and yet the whole is conceived as a unity from start to finish; and the great massive onset of the music is one of the things most worthy of remembrance in English art.

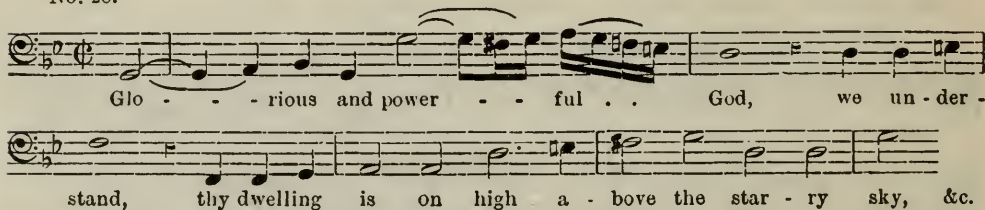
Anthems like these are Gibbons' typical masterpieces; yet his church music shows unusual versatility. Sometimes, as in the extremely fine short six-part full anthem 'O Lord, in thy wrath rebuke me not', from which we may quote a passage of singularly touching beauty—

No. 27.

*[Slow and solemn]*

he approaches very near to the austere tenderness of Byrd—indeed, this anthem is perhaps the oldest in spirit of all Gibbons' great things; and again he can, though only in passing, foreshadow the florid declamation of fifty years later. Thus the verse-anthem 'Glorious and powerful God', which contains fine five-part choral work of the strict type, with a beautiful interweaving 'Amen' to conclude, starts with a bass solo that might be from the pen of Purcell—

No. 28.



and again, in the long and very large and massive 'See, see, the word is incarnate', we have one solitary piece of 'Restoration-style' in the middle of solid modal choral work. However, these forecasts of future methods are rare and tentative; in essentials Gibbons is very emphatically one, though the latest, of the polyphonists. It is, indeed, only occasionally that he writes strictly in the old ecclesiastical modes; and when he

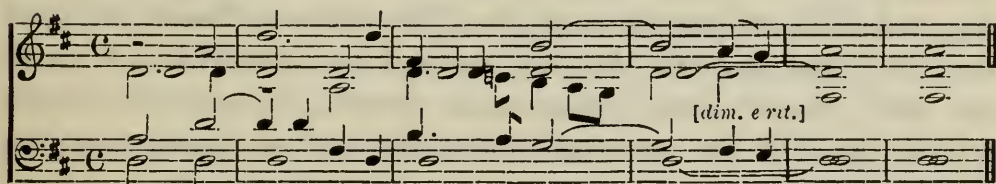
does so—the Mixolydian ‘Blessed be the Lord’ is a typical instance—he is, as a rule, rather stiff and monotonous. But in seriousness of outlook and solidity of workmanship he is one with the older men; and passages such as those just mentioned—almost frivolous though they probably seemed to a purist like Byrd—do not really alter our judgement.

Though Byrd and Gibbons are the only two notably prominent names among the composers of religious music during this period, we must not think that they stood alone. It is true that the current was setting strongly in the direction of secular art, but, nevertheless, the ecclesiastical services claimed the occasional attention of nearly all the best musicians; most of the great typical madrigalists, however, did comparatively little in this field. Wilbye’s Latin motets, such as ‘Homo natus de muliere’ or ‘Ne reminiscaris, Domine’, are distinctly uninteresting; but at any rate one of his two contributions to *The Tears or Lamentations of a Sorrowful Soul*—where there is no definite connexion with any church ritual—is far finer, and this song or psalm or whatever we like to call it, ‘O God, the rock of my whole strength,’ is remarkably expressive and beautiful, and the end is exquisite (notice especially the purposely dead-sounding disposition of parts on the last chords)—

No. 29.

[*Slow*]

Lest that I faint, des-pair, . . . and lan - guish.



It is easy to see here that the style is to all intents and purposes madrigalian, whatever the words may be; Wilbye had, indeed, so far as we can see, no ecclesiastical tinge at all. But this does not apply to Bateson or Weelkes, who, few as were their sacred compositions, show in them a purely non-secular style; the former’s seven-part anthem, ‘Holy, Lord God Almighty,’ is noble music, severe, but full of beauty, and Weelkes’ six-part ‘David’s Lamentation’ is massive and also very touching, with real appreciation of the words (as shown,



for example, in the deeply expressive setting of 'O Absalom, my son, my son'), while his short five-part 'All people clap your hands', if less noteworthy, is manly and individual. Bennet's 'O God of Gods and King of Kings' also deserves notice; and Morley, though perhaps (as we shall shortly see) the most absolutely secular of the madrigalists, produced some of the finest religious work of the time, small in bulk though his contributions are. His Burial Service in G minor—simply harmonic, with a little plain counterpoint (the finest example existent of the style)—is throughout wonderfully serene, tender, and strong, and the expressiveness of the setting of 'Suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee' has no superior anywhere; this is much his best-known sacred work, but there are some remarkable Latin motets from his pen, and other English things—such as the beautiful six-part religious elegy, 'Hark, alleluia,' included in the volume of canzonets of 1597—rank but very slightly, if at all, lower. His Dorian mode verse service, again, is at least as fine as that of Tallis, and his evening service in G minor, if not so striking, is still first-rate work; while the verse-anthem 'Out of the deep' is very expressive and stately. With the increasing vogue of secular solo songs, verse-anthems containing solo and instrumental passages gradually came, as we have already seen, into existence side by side with the older 'full' anthems; but there was as yet no real differentiation of style. The verse-anthems of Byrd and Gibbons and all the rest (except perhaps Ward, who, as we shall shortly have occasion to observe, in certain respects stands outside the general tradition) are as untouched by secular rhythm as anything in the strict *a cappella* manner; and the expression is always similarly grave and dignified.

Though all the best-known madrigalists (apart from Gibbons himself and Byrd, who was only secondarily a worker in this field) can thus hardly make up a dozen religious compositions between them, others divided their energies more evenly between the two departments. Philipps produced a large mass of work of both kinds; but, as with his model Palestrina, there seems to be but little secularity about his non-religious music. Peacham, in his *Complete Gentleman*, says of Philipps:

'He affecteth altogether the Italian vein'; and, indeed, his permanent residence abroad influenced his style very greatly, and in no respect more than in the curious impersonality which it as a whole displays. Just occasionally, as in the very beautiful closing portion of 'Hodie Beata Virgo Maria', No. 11 of the five-part *Cantiones Sacrae* of 1612—a collection which may fairly be taken as representing Philipps at his best—or in this exquisite passage from the middle of the motet for the feast of St. John the Evangelist (No. 3 of the same set)—

No. 30.

[*Slow and expressive*]

de ip - so sa - cro Do - mi - ni -

(sempre p)

- ci pec - to - ris fon - te po - ta - - - - vit.

(dim.) &c.

we see something very like the delicately austere but yet thoroughly human tenderness of Byrd; and in 'Beata Agnes' (No. 10) we have, indeed, in the very expressive rhythmical antiphony of the words 'quem quaesivi, quem amavi,' something that is almost modern in its emotional manner. But, as a rule, Philipps is a very solid and massive, but not at all distinctive composer; his work, both in secular madrigals and in ecclesiastical choral music, is full of very fine, polished workmanship, but the material is, generally speaking, not much more than the residuum of the great Italians, to whose influence is added, in much of the church work, that of Sweelinck. There is the unmistakable 'grand style'; but it is, in Philipps' hands, by no means inconsistent with a certain monotony or even dullness. He is not without English traits; he uses entirely unprepared augmented triads in a manner which, fairly common in England, was exceedingly rare abroad, and the lilting 'Noe' refrains with which he ends



some of his religious motets are not at all unlike the secular work of some of his countrymen. But, taken as a whole, he certainly stands outside the line of purely English composers—though much more so in his vocal than in his instrumental work, to which we shall return later; and it is probably owing to this fact that so lamentably microscopic a fragment of his music is procurable outside the great libraries. Except to the special student, he has perforce to be content with an almost entirely textbook fame, like his contemporary Richard Deering, who also enjoyed considerable, though less extended, reputation; some manuscript motets of the latter in the Christ Church Library—particularly ‘Sleep quietly’—show real dignity and power, though not of a specially individual kind. Both Philipps and Deering adhered to the older faith, and published nearly all their works abroad; and both alike had but little influence in England, though Deering’s music seems for a time to have had considerable vogue at Cambridge, and his later works were great favourites with Cromwell.

Equally neglected, and, though much less technically mature, considerably more original, are the anthems of Ward; the elaborate verse-anthem ‘Let God arise’ is a remarkable work, very vitalized and powerful, and others are but little below it. Ward is certainly the most daring and modern ecclesiastical composer of the madrigalian time. He cannot claim anything remotely like the position of a man like Gibbons in sheer musical worth—indeed, his actual thematic material is not, as a rule, specially striking—but he is full of anticipations of much later times, and, indeed, is not infrequently almost Purcellian in spirit; he has real dramatic expressiveness, and, with all the occasional uncertainty of handling which prevents him from being a really great man in the full sense of the word, his anthems—curiously more advanced in tone than his madrigals—deserve much more study than they have hitherto received. An evening service, printed in Barnard’s collection, is also noteworthy.

Among the other sacred compositions of the time, there may also be mentioned Ravenscroft’s quietly expressive verse-anthems ‘O Jesu meek’ and ‘Ah, helpless soul’, the pure and stately but not as a rule specially distinguished work of

Batten ('Hear my prayer', with its very beautiful ending to the words 'O that I had wings like a dove', is the finest); Damon's sincere and expressive 'Miserere'; Bull's 'O Lord my God, I will exalt thee', and 'Deliver me'—not very remarkable, but thoroughly dignified and free from the exaggerations of his instrumental work; Hooper's short but noteworthy 'O thou God almighty'; Patrick's fine service in G minor; Bevin's Dorian service and other works on the Tallis model, at some distance behind; and Kirbye's fine and solemn 'O Jesu, look', in which his massive if slightly heavy style is well displayed. A word may also be given to some reprinted anthems of Milton, Ford, and Este, though they are inferior to those already mentioned; Milton's 'O had I wings'<sup>1</sup> is free from his usual stiffness of manner; Ford's 'Let God arise' is good strong music, though without any special features ('My griefs are full', from the still unpublished 'Songs of verse and chorus in three parts', is, however, considerably finer); and Este's 'Awake and stand up' and other similar anthems are solid work. But in the music of this period there is nothing like the same wellnigh universally high level attained in the sacred as in the secular field; Byrd and Gibbons are the giants, and others also did some very fine work, but the artistic heart of the nation had turned away from the church. After all, magnificent as the great specimens of Elizabethan church music are, it is of the madrigals that we first of all think when the period is mentioned; and it is not for nothing that, in wellnigh all histories of music, they have given it their distinctive name.

We may now turn to the consideration of the secular vocal music; and as Wilbye's sixty-five madrigals represent the style in its greatest glory, we may therefore fitly describe them in some detail. Each of the two sets contains madrigals in three, four, five, and six parts; in all there are fourteen three-part, fourteen four-part, twenty five-part, and sixteen six-part (with one extra, in six parts, that was contributed to the *Oriana* collection). There is no real development of

<sup>1</sup> This and three others were written for Leighton's *Tears or Lamentations of a Sorrowful Soul*.



style to be noticed in the later collection, except in regard to the three-part madrigals, which are considerably more advanced in the 1609 set than in that published in 1598, beautiful as at least two of the latter are; and Wilbye seems to be able to deal with equal mastery with words of the most diverse kind. The works by which he is best known—'Flora gave me fairest flowers' and 'Sweet honeysucking bees'—represent him in his delicately graceful and lighter mood; they are marked by exquisite polish and charm, but are (at any rate the former) less characteristic than some others. To the same general type belong (in the first set) the four-part 'Lady, when I behold', and (in the second set) the three-part 'So light is love' and 'As fair as morn', and the six-part 'Stay, Corydon, thou swain'; all bright and dainty, full of subtle detail (the lovely interweaving of parts and syncopated complications in 'So light is love' are very notable), and delightful from start to finish. But these represent Wilbye at his slightest; they fulfil their aim quite perfectly, but they do not aim at more than grace. We see him in rather more reflective mood, tender and expressive, with a vein of quiet sadness, in the three-part 'Weep, O mine eyes', and the four-part 'Adieu, sweet Amarillis', from the first set, and in the three-part 'Come, shepherd swains', and the five-part 'Down in a valley' from the second; but these again can be paralleled, though only rarely in such a degree of perfection, in other contemporary madrigal-books. Wilbye seems, indeed, to have resembled Byrd and Gibbons in so far as his heart was really most in his serious work. He could, it is true, be frankly gay (as they hardly ever succeeded in being), and could produce masterpieces like 'Happy streams whose trembling fall', which combine all the distinctive excellences of the composers who primarily sought only for charm of sound; but he is seen at his greatest when the words give him emotional chances. In the first set there are the three-part 'Ye restless thoughts', with its dreamy unrest, and the four-part 'Alas, what hope of speeding', with its passionate last cry, and (in the second set) the very sombre and strong 'I live and yet methinks I do not breathe'; and among the six-part madrigals there are (in the second set) 'Long have I made these hills and valleys

weary', and (in the first) the powerful, gloomy 'When shall my wretched life', and 'Thou art but young, thou sayest', where underneath all the freshness and beauty we feel a deep emotional undercurrent, which finally rises to the surface in a sort of great sob, on plain massive chords in a different rhythm, to the words 'Oh me, that I were young again!' But still more remarkable in some ways are two madrigals from the second book—the four-part 'Happy, Oh! happy he' and the five-part 'All pleasure is of this condition', the closing bars of each of which must be quoted. The latter of these two is throughout in a grey mood, with its feeling, so to speak, dulled and resigned; but just at the end, to the words 'with gnawing grief and never-ending smart', the voices, after some most striking anticipatory harmonic progressions<sup>1</sup>, build themselves up in a sort of last cry of despair—superbly managed both technically and emotionally—and then sink slowly back.

No 31.

[Moderately slow]

With gnaw - ing grief and nev - er end - ing smart, &amp;c.

The musical score for No. 31 is presented in three systems. The first system begins with a treble and bass staff in G major. The second system continues the melody and harmony, with a crescendo marking. The third system shows the final bars of the piece, ending with a piano (pp) marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

But perhaps even more wonderful is the close of 'Happy, Oh!

<sup>1</sup> Forecasting, by wellnigh two hundred years, the opening of the coda of the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony, about the novelty of which so much has been written.



happy he'—the words of which form what is practically a religious poem ending:

Deeming this life a scene, this world a stage,  
Whereon man acts his weary pilgrimage—

on which Wilbye's sombre and restrained music fades slowly into darkness with one poignant utterance of extraordinarily pathetic dignity—

No. 32.  
[*Slow and expressive*]  
Where - on . . man acts his wear - y pil - gri - mago.

Perhaps, indeed, music could hardly show anything finer than the setting of the word 'weary' here, if the passage is sung—as all madrigals should be sung—with the very utmost sensitiveness of expression as regards both tone and rhythm. Wilbye had, indeed, a singular gift for setting individual words from an emotional point of view, as for example 'in despair' from 'Long have I made these hills and valleys weary' or 'yet thou of sighs' from 'Oft have I vowed how dearly I did love thee', or from the same madrigal the passage where the bass voice steadily falls (chiefly chromatically) from the upper B flat to the low G to the words 'Suff'rest my feeble heart to pine with anguish'; other instances are the opening bars of 'Unkind, O stay thy flying', or the setting of 'What uncouth jar' in 'I live and yet methinks I do not breathe', or that of the word 'sobs' (in 'Of joys and pleasing pains') to a clean augmented chord with no note prepared. Wilbye is, indeed, often harmonically very daring, but he nevertheless always shows a rare instinct for sheer beauty of effect; and however closely he may paint the emotion of individual words, he never sacrifices the broad sweep of his massive structures. Indeed, both as a technical musician and as an expressive artist, Wilbye is one of the very greatest figures in English music; his total output, compared with that of many of his contemporaries, was not large, but its

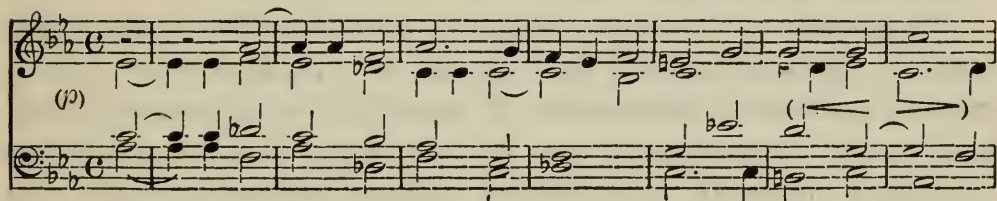
splendid quality places him, along with Purcell, at the head of English secular composers.

Bennet, Bateson, and Weelkes form a trio of madrigalists whose work ranks only a little below that of Wilbye; between the three there is very little to choose, and each is among the great English composers. Bennet seems to be the most frequently sung at the present time, chiefly owing to the very pathetic and beautiful 'Weep, O mine eyes'<sup>1</sup> and the brilliant 'All creatures now are merry-minded' in the *Oriana* collection; but others that are much less known are also very fine. The classic tranquil dignity of 'O grief, where shall poor grief' and 'O sweet grief' is very striking, and nothing could well be lovelier than the close of the former:—

No. 33.

[Moderate]

On - ly my love loves my la-ment-ing, loves my la - ment - -



ing, &c.



Apart from half a dozen slight works contributed to Ravenscroft's *Brief Discourse* (No. 1, 'The hunt is up', is very breezy and piquant), Bennet produced only one book of madrigals, and this is shorter than usual, containing only seventeen works; but considerable variety of style is shown, though there are no examples of the 'ethical madrigal' of Wilbye and Gibbons. Besides those already mentioned, the music-lover's attention may be specially directed to the very graceful

<sup>1</sup> Usually known as 'Flow, O my tears'. Probably this unauthorized alteration was made to distinguish it from Wilbye's setting of the same words, but there are a good many similar duplicates. Wilbye, for example, set 'Lady, when I behold' twice himself, once in four and once in six parts; both he and Bennet set 'Ye restless thoughts' as well as 'Weep, O mine eyes'; Bennet and Bateson set 'Those sweet delightful lilies'; and so on.



'Come shepherds follow me', 'When as I glance', with its delightful coquettish ending, the tranquilly beautiful 'O sleep fond fancy', with its dreamy close on a bare fifth, or the, no doubt intentionally, concluding madrigal 'Rest now, Amphion', containing an ingenious and charming treatment of the words 'Discording concords make the sweetest song'. One madrigal 'Thirsis, sleepest thou', the words of which mix up Melibeus and London town in a curious way, seems to be intended to be humorous; but Bennet is more successful in his ordinary moods. He shows some tendency—decidedly more than Wilbye or Gibbons—towards distinctively modal harmony, as, for example, in 'Cruel, unkind', but still he is in most respects quite modern in his chord-progressions,<sup>1</sup> and his love of delightfully unexpected 'interrupted cadences' is one of his most salient features.

The genius of Bateson seems to have been attracted more towards picturesqueness and a sort of virginal charm than towards pathos or seriousness of emotion; in technical polish he is quite unsurpassed, and his two large *Oriana* madrigals ('Oriana's farewell' and 'When Oriana walked to take the air') are among the most perfect of all in that collection. But on the whole he shows less variety than Bennet; the dewy freshness of 'Beauty is a lovely sweet', 'The nightingale', 'And must I needs depart then', 'Sweet Gemma', and crowds of others, is altogether irresistible, but our memory is very liable to become confused among them. As is the ordinary rule in madrigal books (though there are plentiful exceptions) the five- and six-part works are statelier and larger in scope than the others; and at the end of 'Music some think no music is', where the words rise in mood to the idea of 'music sprung of heav'nly race', Bateson very successfully rises with them, while in the five-part 'Strange were the life' and the six-part 'Thirsis, on his fair Phillis' breast reclining', the tone is more grave and contained than usual. But on the whole Bateson lives in the history of music (as does Herrick, whose poetry is a curiously close artistic parallel) chiefly by virtue of the exquisite finish of his lighter style. A feature which

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, as in 'Rest now, Amphion', he forecasts some of the commonest formulas of the composers of the Restoration period.

is almost peculiar to him—though it does not occur in his very best work—is a curious fondness for very careful piece-meal word-painting of an almost exaggerated kind; he is not infrequently inclined, like, for example, Liszt and similar moderns, to sacrifice perfect continuity of texture for the sake of accurate descriptiveness of the words as they come. ‘Come follow me, fair nymphs’ is a regular hunting narrative of a quaintly realistic order; ‘Dame Venus hence to Paphos go’ begins with a sort of march-rhythm depicting the fact that ‘Mars is gone to the field’; and several other madrigals show this same liking for pictorialism and what may be called ‘short views’. Not indeed that Bateson’s polish of harmonic style ever deserts him even when he inclines to scrappiness; but we miss in these particular madrigals (which, however, as has been said, are not his best) the serenely large sweep of the purest method.

As an example of Bateson in his happiest mood, we may perhaps quote the beginning of ‘Oriana’s farewell’—

No. 34.

[*Slow and delicate*]

Hark, hear you not a heav'n - ly

(*sf*) (*cresc.*) (*sempre*)

har - mo - ny, &c.

The work of Weelkes is also of the very greatest interest, but his temperament seems to have been different from that of either Bennet or Bateson. His music is hardly ever perfectly free from a sort of quaint angularity and slight stiffness which, in his best compositions, seems somehow to add a very pleasant tinge of piquancy, but which, in his less happy moments, produces a certain hard and unsympathetic impression. He has a fondness for a kind of agreeably antique



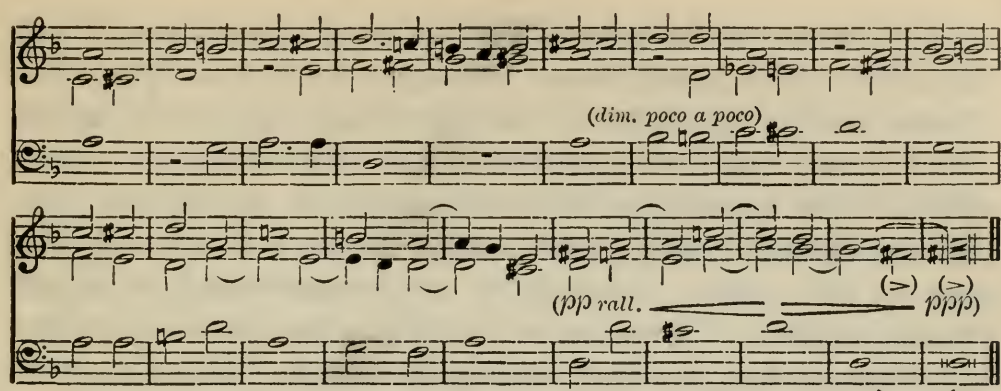
restraint of style; and, though harmonically fully as advanced as any of his fellows, he occasionally diverges into a method which comes closer than is natural with most of them to the rigid ecclesiastical tonality, as in the expressively strong and massive six-part 'Elegy in remembrance of the Ho. the Lord Borough', or the fine five-part madrigal 'Your beauty it allureth', which is pure Mixolydian. But these features do not in the least detract from the charm of his music, which is among the most strongly individual of the period, though perhaps he is inclined to be more unequal than most, and occasionally three or four works on end may show but little to interest. The best known of his larger madrigals is his six-part contribution to the *Triumphs of Oriana*, 'As Vesta was from Latmos' hill descending,' which is one of the very finest in the collection, and is full of massively elaborate counterpoint singularly powerful in effect; but many others of his five- and six-part madrigals are equally strong, and occasionally, as in 'Those spots upon my lady's face' or the delicious 'Sweetheart, arise', he indulges in a delicate softness that is on the whole rather foreign to him. Perhaps, however, we see his wonderful instinct for massiveness most strikingly when he confines himself to a fewer number of parts—as, for example, in the powerful ending of 'Ah me! my wonted joys', designed for four high voices, or still more in the three-part 'Cease sorrows now' (perhaps the finest three-part madrigal in existence) of which we quote the splendid last page—

No. 35.

[Moderately slow, and expressive]

Yet while I hear the knol - ling of the bell, of . . the bell, be - fore

. . I . . die, be - - fore . I die, I'll sing my faint fare-well, &c.



Weelkes' Ballets with Fa la burdens differ from Morley's better-known examples of the style in being on the whole rather more formal and, so to speak, masculine; and in some of them, perhaps, the touch is a little too heavy. But the best—such for example, as 'To shorten winter's sadness', 'Hark, all ye lovely saints above', 'Lady, your eye my love enforced', and perhaps most of all, 'On the plains fairy trains'—are flawless little gems, slightly less modern in tone<sup>1</sup> than Morley's, especially in rhythm, but perhaps somewhat more artistically solid; they should be sung, there can be no doubt, quite quickly, with any amount of delicate light and shade and accent, and real laughter in the voices. His three-part 'Airs or Fantastic Spirits' are, however, on the whole much inferior, though they are interesting as a rare example of Elizabethan musical humour. The words are very odd and often quite unintelligible—one is a translation of Horace's unpleasantly bitter ode to Lyce, with a Fa la refrain; and though there is much very ingenious, if rather heavy, counterpoint, and quaint wit, such as the illustration of Messalina going 'up and down the house a-crying, for her monkey lies a-dying', yet the twenty-five little pieces are of hardly any artistic importance, in spite of their frequent spirit and point—the best are those with rather more reasonable words, such as 'The nightingale' or the very charming 'Upon the hill the bonny boy'. The book ends very inappropriately with a very serious but on the whole rather dull elegy entitled 'A remembrance of my friend Mr. Thomas Morley'.

<sup>1</sup> 'Welcome sweet pleasure', however, is as purely a squarely harmonized tune as any nineteenth-century part-song; but it is one of the least interesting of the Ballets.



The secular vocal music of Byrd is a curious instance of the limitations of a great man. Thirty out of the forty-seven 'Songs of Sundry Natures' are secular, and yet it is hard to discover any particular genius of any kind in any of them, while in the remaining seventeen there is, as we have previously noticed, really noble work. Indeed, in an age that was, on the whole, so decidedly non-ecclesiastical in its art, the disposition of Byrd is noteworthy; he seems to become a new man when he touches religious words. It is true that, as we shall shortly see, he could write secular instrumental music equal to the very best of his time; but somehow he, consciously or unconsciously, inclined to the view that vocal music should be primarily religious. A few exceptions there no doubt are; two of the 'Psalms, Songs, and Sonnets'—No. 9, 'This sweet and merry month of May,' and especially No. 13, 'Come jolly swains,' with its delightful half-realistic setting of the refrain 'We smiling laugh, while others sigh repenting', are full of gay charm of a subtle kind. But when we have mentioned two or three other less remarkable specimens of his secular choral works—the graceful 'Though Amarillis dance in green' (No. 12 of the 'Songs of Sadness and Piety'), and the dignified 'Wounded I am' and the rather charming though quaint and stiff dialogue between two shepherds, 'Who made thee, Hob, forsake the plough' (both from the 'Songs of Sundry Natures')—we are left with a very considerable residue that is merely heavy and dull. We have only to look at his painfully ponderous setting of the playful poetry of 'When I was otherwise than now I am' to realize how unwillingly this great genius sported with Amarillis in the shade; and his contemporaries knew it well enough. He was at the height of his fame when the *Oriana* collection of madrigals was issued, but he was not asked to take part; it has been suggested that this omission was due to the fact that he was a Romanist, but Croce (who was included) was one also, and it is much more likely that Morley, though knowing as a friend that Byrd was, as he says, 'never without reverence to be named of the musicians', realized, as an editor, that his contribution to an entertainment of such a kind would hardly be welcome, unless he happened to be in an altogether exceptional mood. And

again Peacham, in his *Complete Gentleman*, speaks of him as 'naturally disposed to Gravitie and Pietie', rather than to 'light Madrigals and Canzonets'; though he softens the partial depreciation by comparing some of the secular works very favourably with Italian models, which indeed they resemble on the whole more than they do contemporary English compositions.

The other supreme religious composer of the time, Orlando Gibbons, seems to have taken the same general austere view of vocal music; but his divergence into the secular field in his solitary volume of 'Madrigals and Motets' produced far more satisfactory results. Though he calls these twenty pieces by this double title, there is no line of demarcation to be drawn among them, and the words of all are non-religious in character; but at the same time he strikes out a special line for himself (possibly taking his cue from some particularly fine works by Wilbye produced fourteen years earlier), and so we have a volume that is neither strictly secular nor strictly religious, but rather, so to speak, 'ethical.' Without one single exception, the words of all these pieces deal ultimately with sadness or death, or preach some moral lesson; there is nothing definitely religious anywhere, but the whole tone is distinctly antagonistic to the general current of the time as shown in contemporary vocal music, and occasionally, as in the insistence on 'Lais when old' and her 'winter face', passes into sombre bitterness. Gibbons does not, as Byrd did, force himself to uncongenial work; but he sets himself to find words which satisfy his moods, and discards all others. All these splendid madrigals, which must indeed rank with the very greatest music of the age, are massive and, so to speak, reserved in style; but the composer's seriousness does not lead him towards an older harmonic language—on the contrary he deals freely in augmented chords,<sup>1</sup> and shows practically, in these works,

<sup>1</sup> Entirely unprepared augmented chords are indeed occasionally found in the works of Whyte as well as in those of Byrd and most Elizabethans. It is true that in the case of Gibbons we do not always hear them as he wrote them; certain bars in the familiar 'The silver swan' are probably sung wrongly nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand. Some editor at some time, in a fit of pseudo-historical carefulness, altered the E flat in the first chord of the second of these



no traces of definite modal influences. 'The silver swan', exquisite though it is, is one of the slightest in the book, though none could be more polished in expression; perhaps the finest are the subtle and strong 'Now each flowing bank', the lengthy, solemnly impressive 'What is our life,' and 'How art thou thrall'd' (with a second part, 'Farewell all joys'), the last pages of which are truly magnificent. Perhaps we may quote the beautiful close of 'Dainty fine bird that art encaged', so as to show how Gibbons treats words that come as close as any used by him ever do to the typical madrigalian sentiments—

No. 37.

(*Slow and expressive*)

Thou liv'st sing-ing, but I sing and die, &c.

The musical score for No. 37 is written for two staves, treble and bass clef, in common time (C). The tempo/mood is marked '(Slow and expressive)'. The lyrics are 'Thou liv'st sing-ing, but I sing and die, &c.' The melody is characterized by a slow, expressive style with many ties and a final cadence. There are dynamic markings like '(p)' and '(f)' and phrasing slurs throughout the piece.

Apart from this one volume, Gibbons is not known to have written any secular vocal music, except a curious six-part production entitled, 'The Cries of London'—a very quaint experiment of a tentatively realistic and humorous kind; two similar works by Deering, and two or three more by other composers, are in existence. They find their closest parallels in earlier French productions, like those of Jannequin; but in

bars—which in the original part-books is as plain as any conceivable note can be—to a D—

No. 36.

The musical score for No. 36 is written for two staves, treble and bass clef, in common time (C). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody is more rhythmic and active than No. 37, with many eighth and sixteenth notes. It also features ties and a final cadence.

English music they are purely isolated apparitions of no artistic importance, except in so far as they may be considered to show the beginnings of a feeling for dramatic musical expression of a popular kind.

Morley is a very interesting figure, 'one of the most sympathetic in the history of English music.'<sup>1</sup> We have already noted his achievements as ecclesiastical composer, and as theoretician, and later on mention will also be made of his instrumental work; here we are concerned with him as madrigalist. His madrigals, canzonets, and ballets are (even though showing, as they occasionally do, considerable modal influences) undoubtedly the most modern in tone of all the vocal music of the period; he has great command over varied and piquant rhythm of a distinctively secular character, and he has a frank delight in tune for its own sake. Hardly anything, indeed, could well be more charmingly fresh and graceful than such well-known little gems as 'Now is the month of maying', or 'My bonny lass she smileth'; and though the book of Ballets which contains these is much his most familiar work, the Canzonets and Madrigals show even more attractive features. The Ballets, taking them as a whole, are pure dance-measures, non-contrapuntal in character, and as a rule slight in texture, however polished; they lack on the one hand the tender lyrical vein that we find in the best work of Dowland, and on the other the intellectual solidity of the madrigals of Wilbye or Bennet. It seems very likely that some of the music is borrowed more or less closely, as the words certainly sometimes are, from the Ballets of the Italian Gastoldi; Burney says definitely that various bars in 'Sing we and chaunt it', the fourth of the set, are taken note for note from Gastoldi's 'L'innamorato', and Rimbault suggests a good deal more. Morley himself, in his 'Plain and Easy Introduction', says of the Ballet-form, 'A slight kind of musick it is, and as I take it devised to be danced to voices'; and very possibly he did not attach any special importance to his work in this line. Anyhow, there seems to be no evidence of any such plagiarism either in connexion with any of the rest of his work, or with any of the compositions of any of his famous

<sup>1</sup> Nagel, ii. 125.

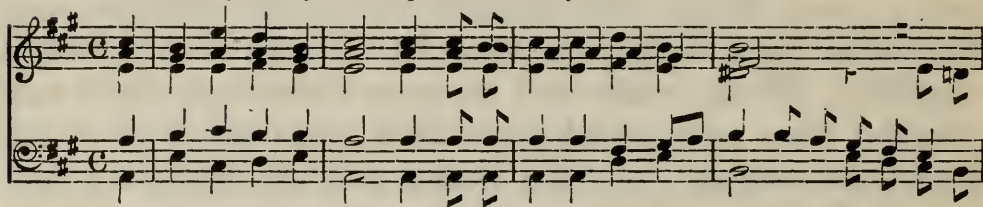


contemporaries; and the apparent inference is that Morley did not think it worth while to lay claims to the customary complete proprietorship. The two best-known of the ballets are certainly, on the whole, the most modern in quality; though 'Lady, those cherries plenty' is also very delightful, and 'Singing alone' and 'I saw my lovely Phillis' show rather more elaboration of texture, as also does 'Leave alas this tormenting', which is designed on lines rather more spacious than usual. The opening of 'What saith my dainty darling' may perhaps be quoted as a typical example of Morley's ordinary ballet-style<sup>1</sup>—

No. 38.

[*Quick and bright*]

What saith my dain-ty dar-ling? Shall I now your love ob - tain?



Fa la la la la, &c.



But, if we wish to see Morley's secular vocal music at its best, we should turn to the Madrigals and the Canzonets, the latter being really indistinguishable from the former, except that they are, as a rule, somewhat slighter in scope. Some of the two-part canzonets (notably, 'Go ye, my canzonets') are singularly ingenious and charming specimens of their very difficult form, and in all Morley makes full use of the resources of counterpoint, while at the same time preserving unimpaired his singular modernity of style; sometimes, as in the three-part canzonet, 'Do you not know how love first lost his seeing',

<sup>1</sup> The Musical Antiquarian Society's edition states that this is the original key, but this is an inadvertent error; it should be a minor third higher.

he adopts a sort of cross between the methods of the ballet and the madrigal, starting with a purely rhythmical tune, and ending with a dominant pedal-point, but also employing contrapuntal detail considerably more fully than in the works of the harmonic type. As a rule, however, anything like part-song methods is not to be seen in the canzonets and madrigals, the deliciously smooth and rich interweaving of parts in the two- and three-part canzonets is of altogether exceptional quality, and in matter of technique the madrigals can hold their own with any. But yet when we take up Morley's madrigals directly after a course of Wilbye or Gibbons, or even Bennet or Weelkes or Bateson, we seem to miss something; in a sense Morley speaks our own language more fluently than they do—his dainty laughter is as fresh and entrancing now as it ever was, his rhythmical schemes might have been devised yesterday, and his tunes haunt us as they did his contemporaries—but the instrument he plays has only one string. We know well enough, from the Burial Music and other religious work, that his nature was very far from lacking in emotional depth; but he seems to have felt throughout that anything of the kind was out of place in the secular field. The madrigals of his great contemporaries, even if, like Bateson, they are essentially light-hearted composers, yet show sooner or later something below the surface of the words; there is some largeness of style, some reflection of the choral traditions that had been built up by ecclesiastical music. But Morley is from first to last sensuous and nothing more, as pure and delightful as a composer can be, but that is all; in the exquisitely beautiful canzonet, 'Deep lamenting grief', there is no grief either deep or lamenting, and in the equally delightful madrigals, 'Lady, why grieve you still me,' and 'O sweet alas!' (one of Morley's most perfect masterpieces), the utmost emotionalism he can secure is a sort of playful delicate tenderness. Words that to Wilbye would suggest touches, however passing, of real feeling suggest to Morley nothing but charming *insouciance*; he has 'but fed on the roses and lain on the lilies of life'. But still to criticize Morley's madrigals harshly is like breaking a butterfly on the wheel; it is only in comparison with some of the work of his



fellows that we feel his own limitations, and when we remember that the ultimate criterion of a work of art is its handling of the given material, it is impossible to deny Morley a place among the few quite flawless workmen in the history of English music. Gems like 'Besides a fountain', 'Good morrow, fair ladies', 'What ails my darling', 'April is in my mistress' face', 'Come lovers follow me', 'The fields above with spangled flowers', and many more, will keep his name green as long as musicians know the value of charm of sound; and his two editorial contributions to the *Oriana* collection—'Arise, awake', and 'Hard by a crystal fountain'<sup>1</sup>—placed before the rest an ideal of sunny melody and brightness that none of them equalled, far less surpassed.

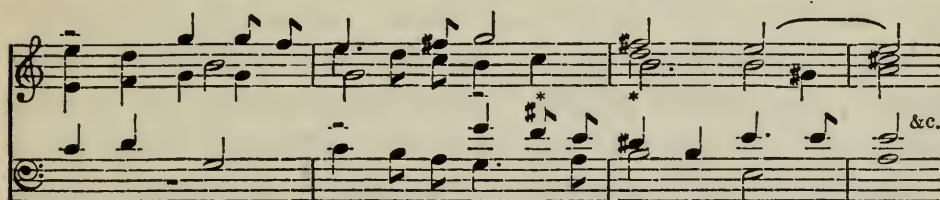
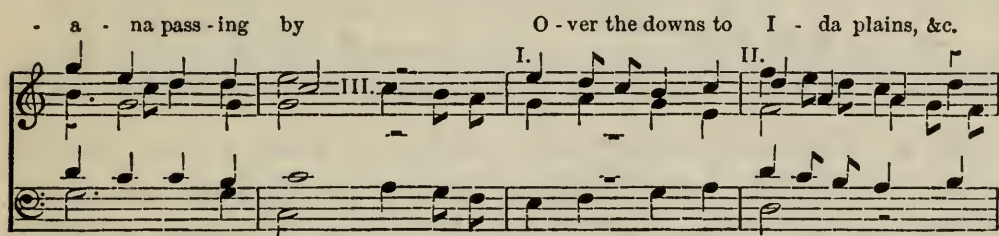
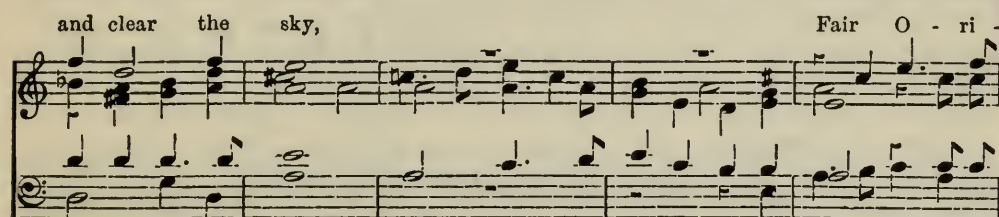
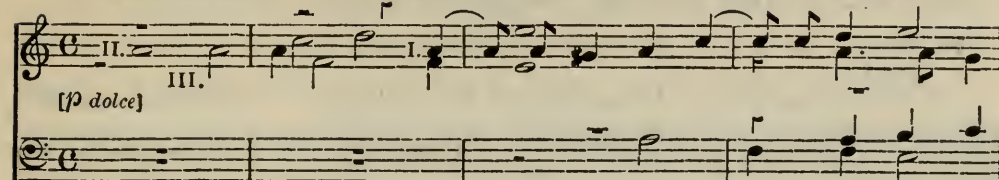
We may now briefly consider the music of the less distinguished contributors to the great collection. All the madrigals reach a high standard, and there is nothing that can be called unworthy work; though the productions of some of the men who are to us little if anything more than names—Norcome, Ellis Gibbons, Holmes, Hunt, Lisley, Edward Johnson—are, by the side of the best, relatively more or less uninteresting. But others who are also only stars of inferior magnitude are represented by very charming work; Nicolson's 'Sing shepherds all', Marson's 'The nymphs and shepherds danced Lavoltos' (with its delightful tripping runs on dotted rhythms), the elder Tomkins' imaginative and original, if not somehow quite mature 'The fauns and satyrs tripping', Cavendish's slight but very sunny 'Come gentle swains', the elder Hilton's 'Fair Oriana, beauty's queen' (with its very pretty bell-like refrain), Cobbold's dainty 'With wreaths of rose and laurel' (which Burney, very hastily, ranked the highest of the whole set), Milton's 'Fair Orian in the morn', and especially Carlton's 'Calm was the air', of which we may quote the exquisitely fresh and placidly antique opening, which secures the atmosphere of the words as perfectly as does any madrigal of the period—

<sup>1</sup> A setting of the same words by Giovanni Croce (from *Musica Transalpina*) is No. 26 of the *Oriana* group; it is interesting and has a fine ending, but it is far less secular and flexible than Morley's—the ecclesiastical influence predominates, whether consciously or not.

No. 39.

[Moderately slow]

Calm . . . was the air, calm . . . was the air



[The C and D marked \* in the second treble part have no sharps in the original part-books.  
See chapter xiii.]

all these are well worthy to hand down to posterity the names of men who (apart from the remarkably talented and far too neglected Carlton) are hardly, if at all, known to us by any other music. Pilkington's 'When Oriana walked to take the air', with its beautiful quiet and rich ending, is an interesting example of a composer who, in spite of some charming 'Madrigals and Pastorals', is chiefly familiar by his accompanied Ayres<sup>1</sup>; Jones' 'Fair Oriana, deeming to wink at folly' is only an average work of one who also chiefly devoted himself to Ayres; and John Mundy's 'Lightly she tripp'd o'er the dales' is a bright, but not particularly remarkable example of a composer who has been rather hardly treated by Burney and Nagel, but nevertheless wrote some very polished things,

<sup>1</sup> See later, p. 104.



notably, 'Of all the birds that I have heard' (No. 10 of the mixed sacred and secular 'Songs and Psalms' of 1594)—

No. 40.

[Fast]

Of all the birds, of all the birds that I have heard, the night-in - gale doth

bear the bell, &c.

&c.

The image shows a musical score for a madrigal. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system begins with the lyrics 'Of all the birds, of all the birds that I have heard, the night-in - gale doth'. The second system begins with 'bear the bell, &c.' and ends with '&c.'. The music is written in a style typical of the late 16th century, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked '[Fast]'.

with a delightfully unexpected ending. Este, whose 'Hence, stars, you dazzle but the sight' heads the *Oriana* collection, wrote several volumes of madrigals<sup>1</sup> of, on the whole, no very special merit, though the breezy three-part 'How merrily we live' keeps his memory green; the fine end of Farmer's 'Fair nymphs, I heard one telling' rather overshadows the earlier portions, and his style is not as a rule quite up to the great level, though he could occasionally write very delightful things like 'You pretty flowers', or 'O stay sweet love' (both in the 1599 collection), and massive bits of contrapuntal work like the eight-part 'You blessed bowers', from the same set. The one contributor to *Oriana* who yet remains unnoticed<sup>2</sup> is Kirbye, whose other madrigals have been lately reprinted; his *Oriana* work shows him as an interesting composer, a little stiffer in style than most, and with a sort of manly quaintness that is individual and attractive, though he lacks the gaiety of feeling and the easy technique of nearly all his colleagues. When he is at his best, as in 'Sleep now, my Muse' (from the set of 1597),<sup>3</sup> he can write music of a singular kind of grave

<sup>1</sup> The last of the second set (1606) has the curious title 'O metaphysical Tobacco'; the third set (1610) includes 'Pastorales, Anthemes, Neopolitanes, Fancies, and Madrigales'—the 'Neopolitanes' seem much like ordinary madrigals, the 'Fancies' are noticed later (p. 115).

<sup>2</sup> Excluding, of course, Croce, who was an Englishman neither by race nor residence.

<sup>3</sup> There are two versions of this, one in four parts and one in six, the

tender charm, instinct with a quiet solemn beauty; and 'Up then, Melpomene' (with its second part 'Why wail we thus'), shows really very considerable power of a sombre kind, and more variety than usual with him. As a rule, however, he seems to have a partiality for what might be called the rather stiffly lugubrious style; he is very fond of amorously melancholy words, and his madrigals are on the whole inclined to be depressing in effect—not that they are 'serious' in the sense applicable to many of Wilbye and especially Gibbons, but Kirbye writes as if he were nearly always gloomily lovesick. Yet he can occasionally rise to deal with moods of a loftier character, and does so very successfully, as at the place in 'Why wail we thus' where all the voices climb to the top of their registers at the words 'And is enstalled now in heaven's height'; and anyhow his massive solid workmanship, free from the least vestige of mere prettiness, commands cordial respect. In several ways he seems to have had much in common with Byrd; we shall notice later<sup>1</sup> certain curious traits of harmony which, though often met with elsewhere, are perhaps most frequent in the works of these two composers.

Besides Byrd himself, whose omission we have already noticed, several madrigal composers of the period were excluded from the *Oriana* collection, for one reason or another. Lack of sufficient secularity of style was probably the reason for the non-appearance of Philipps, whose madrigals, all based on the pure old continental models, and many, in their somewhat stiff way, altogether first-rate work,<sup>2</sup> had been issued between 1591 and 1598; it is true that he was a Romanist and had denationalized himself by permanent residence abroad, adopting a foreign name and owning no allegiance to English music, but still Morley had included a translated madrigal of Croce, who was also a Romanist and not an Englishman at all. Farnaby had produced a volume of canzonets in 1598, and his instrumental music must have made his name well known; Dowland, however, was probably excluded (though he visited

latter slightly expanded; the comparison between the two is deeply interesting, and the technical alterations show curious forecasts of Bach's methods under similar circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Notably 'Voi volete,' printed by Hawkins.



England in the year when the collection was published) as being essentially a lutenist-composer. Probably Ward (whose madrigals issued in 1613 contain fine massive work, notably the fairly well-known 'Die not, fond man'), Gibbons, Ford, and the younger Tomkins were considered too young at the time; Gibbons certainly was only eighteen. Ford, though now well-nigh solely known by the accompanied songs that will shortly be noticed, wrote some very charming three-part madrigals of a comparatively slight kind, that do not seem ever to have been published; one of them, 'My love is like a garden full of flowers,' is notable for the very modern use of the pause-mark for emotional effect. The madrigals of the younger Tomkins (son of the *Oriana* contributor) are, however, much more remarkable, and rank but little below the best; usually they are joyous and fairly light in style, but show plenty of solid technical ability, as Ford's hardly do. Besides the general dedication of the set, in the usual fulsome manner, to the Earl of Pembroke, these madrigals are individually inscribed—a very rare custom; No. 1 is headed 'to my deare father, Mr. Thomas Tomkins', No. 28 (the last) 'to my sonne, Nathanael Tomkins', while others bear the names of various relatives, 'Doctor Douland', 'my ancient and much revered Master, William Byrd' (a particularly sportive Fa-la), 'Mr. Orlando Gibbons' (also very amatorious), and so on. The dedication of two of the very lightest numbers to the two most serious composers of the day is odd; but perhaps Tomkins was gifted with a special sense of humour.

The elder Ferrabosco hardly (though his madrigals have been included in Arkwright's *Old English Edition*) seems to demand notice in the present work, inasmuch as, great as was his reputation in England, he resided largely in his native Italy, where indeed all his music was originally published, except one madrigal contributed to a collection issued at Antwerp. His work, though not at times devoid of a certain quaint gracefulness, is as a rule rather stiff and dull, showing powerful ecclesiastical influences in its tonality, and very little rhythmical freedom; the one trait which he may have acquired from his residence in England is a fondness for certain harmonic curiosities common in the works of

his great friend Byrd, and other Englishmen, but very rare abroad.<sup>1</sup>

Leaving the madrigals, we may now turn to the 'Ayres'; and in the pages of these beautifully printed and decorated books we see the beginnings of the change that was so soon to overwhelm the great choral music at the height of its glory. Some of the Ballets of Morley and Weelkes, as we have already noticed, inclined very definitely away from the contrapuntal methods towards the type of the purely harmonic part-song with a tune at the top; but the Ayres go much further. Only very rarely—as in the eighth and sixteenth of Dowland's first book, 'Burst forth my tears,' and 'Would my conceit', and especially several in Pilkington's 1605 publication—do we see anything at all contrapuntal in character, and even here the form is sectional and not continuous; and indeed (though in these particular cases the permission can hardly have held good) we have already noted that the composers allowed individual parts to be sung separately—which to the madrigalists, or to these composers themselves when writing madrigals (as a few of them also did) would have been an unthinkable barbarity. Further, a very large proportion of the Ayres were not even optionally written for more than a solo voice with accompaniment; and the lute was an instrument incapable of any sort of clear part-playing, or indeed, of more than decidedly sketchy harmony.<sup>2</sup> So the net result was that, as the Ayres became more and more popular, and the influence of the Italian *nuova musica* spread in England, the old contrapuntal traditions of vocal music gradually lost their force, in spite of the fact that, beside men like Wilbye or Gibbons, all these others were merely cultured amateurs. Not indeed that the purely English composers of Ayres were apparently attracted by the declamatory innovations of Monteverde and his school; the Anglo-Italian Ferrabosco the younger is the only one who shows such influences, and in his case they are

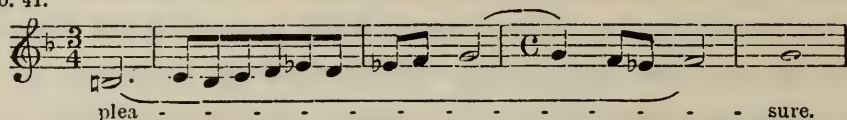
<sup>1</sup> See chapter xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the accompaniments are, in their slight impressionistic sort of style, extraordinarily well designed as a rule; and it is very much to be regretted that modern versions often sacrifice this delicate artistic economy for something much more 'complete and accurate,' but heavy and lifeless.



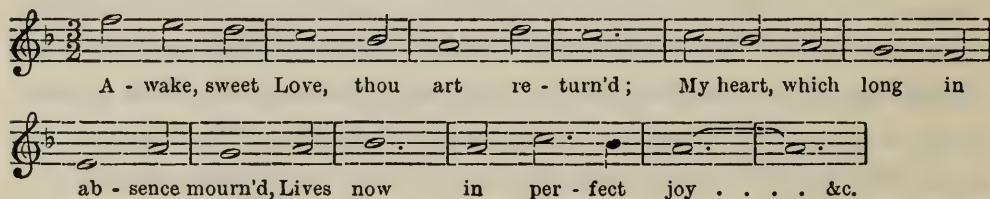
somewhat marked, *fiorituri* like this passage from No. 27 of the book of solo Ayres of 1609, 'What shall I wish'—

No. 41.



being quite unknown in the work of Dowland or Campion or Rosseter or Jones, and indeed suggesting a sort of mixture of the styles of Monteverde and the later Restoration composers. And, for practical purposes—very charming as many of the other songs of the period are—we may take these four composers as the chief representatives of the style. Their aim throughout was to be lyrical; they set the words in plain strophic form, and avoided all musical elaboration or anything which would distract attention from the poetry. But the means varied; and it was realized that lyrical directness was not at all inconsistent with considerable rhythmical flexibility. The very square-cut manner shown in such rather stilted, though pure, songs as Dowland's 'Now, O now, I needs must part',<sup>1</sup> or yet more his 'Away with these self-loving lads', is not at all common, and Dowland himself shows it but rarely after his first book; and even there the great bulk of the songs are more of the type of the exquisite 'Awake sweet love', from which we may quote the first bars of the tune (the penultimate note of this extract has often been incorrectly given as a G)—

No. 42.



tinted, so to speak, in shades of delicate grey, and full of a quiet beauty and tender charm that raise their composer to a very high place among English artists. We shall not find in this music anything like depth of emotion; and the rare

<sup>1</sup> Possibly this may be a folk-tune: it was very popular later on as 'The Frog Galliard'.

occasions when the beautiful poetry rises to real passion evoke no corresponding effort from the composer. There is no doubt a good deal of monotony about some of the volumes; and a good many of their composers are never capable of really distinctive work that grips and retains the attention. But it is unfair to compare the songs, as some have done, to scentless flowers; the motto which a contemporary hand has written in the British Museum copy of Jones' 'Musicall dreame'—'musica medicina doloris'—comes nearer the mark. Campion's 'Divine and Morall Songs' may occasionally wear a gravely austere face, as in the beautiful 'Most sweet and pleasing are thy waies, O Lord', but it is an austerity that overflows with tranquil happiness; and in the same collection the song 'Never weather-beaten sail' has a refrain 'O come quickly, sweetest Lord, and take my soule to rest', which is quite trippingly lilting, almost to a dance-measure, in its innocent joyousness. As a short but complete example of the Ayres, we may quote the following from the Campion-Rosseter book of 1601—this particular song is by Rosseter, and there are five verses in all (the tablature of the accompaniment has already been given on p. 69)—

No. 43.

And would you see my Mis - tris face, it is a flow - rie gar-den place, where

(Very soft and detached.)

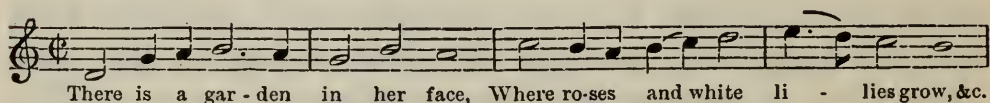
knots of beau - ties have such grace, that all is worke and no where space.

Rosseter is, however, not by any means the most distinguished of the company of Ayre-writers (though Nagel is unduly depreciatory); but this particular example has been



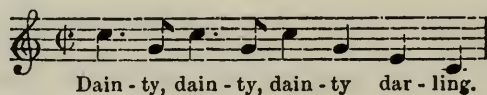
chosen as in several respects very typical. Dowland (at any rate in his first and best book) and especially Pilkington—a distinctly attractive composer, whose style is considerably the most madrigalian of all the lutenists, and whose ‘Rest, sweet nymphs’, ‘Now peep, bo-peep’, ‘With fragrant flowers’, and a good many more, are beautifully graceful and polished—could do work of a considerably more solid kind; and Campion, as in the charming song of which the melody begins as follows (the harmony is strictly modal—Mixolydian—like that of many Ayres)—

No. 44.



could very often produce melodies more flowing and more distinctive in outline, as could also Morley,<sup>1</sup> and, though less frequently, Ford (whose ‘Since first I saw your face’ is one of the most familiar of all Elizabethan pieces), Corkine, and Robert Johnson. But ‘And would you see my mistris face’ is very typical of the great bulk of the Ayres in its dainty stiffness, its deliberate rhythm, its half-sequential melody, its exquisitely finished ‘impressionistic’ harmony; practically every composer shows the type. It will be observed that the lute-accompaniment follows the general outline of the tune; this is the general rule, but there are exceptions, as in the vigorous twanging C major chords on the accented beats at the beginning of No. 15 of Jones’ second book, with its delightful opening phrase—

No. 45.



The lute is occasionally given a few solo bars of prelude or interlude; but, though it is very possible that the performer may have played on his own account between the verses, so as to give the singer rest, it is rare to find any purely instrumental passages indicated. Dowland’s second book shows

<sup>1</sup> The delicious ‘It was a lover and his lass’, and ‘O mistress mine’, are probably his own tunes; though some writers reckon them as folk-songs.

several examples; but perhaps the most remarkable is an anonymous, and extremely pathetic and beautiful, song, 'O death, rock me asleep',<sup>1</sup> of an unusually extended and organized type, and supplied with a somewhat elaborate lute accompaniment designed on a sort of ground-bass. In this kind of work the Ayre altogether breaks away from the more or less observable connexion with folk-music which most examples show (unlike their parallels abroad); there is the same grace and charm of phrase, but the form has outgrown its bonds.

We have already, in the previous chapter, mentioned the two or three pieces in the instrumental collections of the time which are the work of composers of the earlier generation; for the rest—though we cannot always feel quite certain of the date of the items to which no name is attached—they are by the contemporaries of the transcribers, and fall within the period we are now considering. Those by Sweelinck<sup>2</sup> and other foreign composers lie of course outside our inquiry; but their inclusion is interesting as showing the range of sympathies of English music-lovers. These pieces are of all sorts of kinds—dance-tunes, preludes, contrapuntal fantasias, variations on popular tunes of the day, variations on plainsong church melodies, arrangements of madrigals, descriptive programme-music, &c.; in the Forster and Cosyn collections at Buckingham Palace several vocal pieces are also included. The *Parthenia* collection, being the only music of this kind that was thought worthy of print at the time, represents, on the whole, the style at its highest level; the others are specially interesting as showing the music that was in general vogue—several numbers of presumably more than ordinary popularity are met with in two or three of them as well (in some cases) as in isolated MS. copies. But it can hardly be gainsaid that, as a rule, the instrumental performers of Elizabethan times were apparently satisfied far more easily than the singers; it is only very rarely that, in reading

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Wooldridge's *Old English Popular Music*—though why it should be included in that work is difficult to see.

<sup>2</sup> It seems likely that Bull, while at Antwerp, became well acquainted with the great Amsterdam musician.



through this music for the virginals, we see anything even approximately like the maturity of style and technical mastery that are so splendidly obvious in the great choral music. The composers, even the greatest, seem—with but few and passing exceptions—to have regarded instrumental music, as, so to speak, a trifling thing; they dallied with it for amusement, but reserved their serious energies for other work. No doubt, at the time, the actual novelty of sound cast a glamour over the essential inferiority of material; but to us, for whom there is no such novelty, the main impression left by the great mass is, compared with that left by most of the choral music, one of somewhat monotonous dullness.

Not indeed that there is any lack of variety as regards the ostensible plans of the pieces; they vary in length from a few bars to several pages, and in difficulty from simple chords to rapid virtuosity that very distinctly tests even a modern pianist's fingers.<sup>1</sup> But there is a strong family likeness about them all: and, apart from a handful of examples at either end of the scale of merit, they differ on the whole very little in quality. We see the frank enjoyment of instrumental expression as such, quite apart from the value of the thing expressed; apart from the variations, and the tentative experiments in the direction of fugues, there is practically never anything of the nature of a thematic subject, and very little in the way of organized structure. As a matter of fact, vocal music had had a long start, and it is only reasonable that it should show much more certainty of style than a branch of art that had not existed more than, at the most, fifty or sixty years when the earliest of the works we are now considering was written. As we have observed in the previous chapter, instrumental music started on the foundation laid by vocal, and consequently, from the harmonic point of view, there is little or none of the tentative stammering of the beginnings of choral composition; but in other respects musicians took some time to acquire a real sense of organic instrumental composition, which indeed was not perfectly developed till long after the other branch had reached its full

<sup>1</sup> And they were then, there is little doubt, played with perfectly straight fingers and hardly any use of more than the three long middle ones!

maturity. The harmonic texture of the virginal music of Byrd and Morley and Gibbons is exactly the same as that of their choral work, whether ecclesiastical or secular; it is sober and restrained, essentially diatonic in character, and to a very large extent confined to the chords and progressions used in strict counterpoint. But combined with this we see pages and pages of the merest 'passage-work', which are obviously inspired by nothing else than the attractiveness of playing notes, no matter how artistically meaningless, at a quicker pace than voices could sing them. In a few cases—chiefly in the works of Bull—these passages take the form of arpeggios, broken octaves, or repeated notes; but as a rule they are built on scale-formulas. Scale-playing, as such, had a fascination for these early instrumental composers that we find hard to realize; the mere succession of notes in fixed and persistent alphabetical order was a novelty to men whose ideas of music had been almost entirely gained from choral compositions, and when these successions were heard in extensions beyond the range of voices, and also at a brilliant speed, the fascination was complete, irrespectively of the artistic interest which listeners would have demanded when singing was in question. No doubt the greatest men represented in these collections rose often above this level, and even the lesser often confined themselves to decorative ornamentation of a sporadic rather than continuous kind; but still it is impossible to avoid noticing the curious parallel between these early virtuosos and their descendants in these latter days, shown in the similar delight in pure finger-work as such.

It is in the dance-tunes that passages of this kind are seen least; but nevertheless there is, in spite of this absence of confusing elements, very little rhythmical spring at all in these very decorous and sedate, but decidedly rambling, little pieces. Pavanes, galliards, courantes, and allemandes—spelt, according to the vague fashions of those times, in many different ways—are the most common; but very few show any sort of obvious dance-measure. One of the exceptions is Byrd's beautiful and stately 'Pavane, The Earle of Salisbury' from *Parthenia*, the beginning of which may be quoted as a specimen of this sort of music at its finest—indeed,



there is probably nothing more balanced and artistically complete in all the literature of virginal music—

No. 46.

[*Moderately fast*]



Gibbons' 'The Lord of Salisbury, his Pavin', from the same collection, is also a very fine piece, larger and perhaps in certain respects of somewhat subtler expressive character, but the dance-measure has here altogether vanished, and with it has vanished some of the structural mastery; another by him in the Fitzwilliam Collection (No. 292) is of a transitional type, but also noteworthy music. As a rule these pieces possess hardly any pulse at all; they omit indeed the scale-passages so frequent elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and confine their ornamentations to mordents and trills, but it is difficult to imagine that they can ever have been turned to practical use. The Allemandes or Almans retain perhaps the most of the original swing, and three by Robert Johnson and a 'Meridian Alman' set by Giles Farnaby (Fitzwilliam Collection, Nos. 145-7, and 291), for example, have a briskness of movement that is very pleasant; but as a rule these pieces, though solid in general style, and harmonically very pure, are neither specially enlivening nor artistically of much importance, though occasionally there are instances of the same material being used in different numbers of a dance-suite which are interesting as early experiments in unification. All that can be said for most of them is that they are free from the flimsy passage-

<sup>1</sup> When, as is sometimes the case, the dance-tune is taken as the basis of variations, the treatment is exactly the same as with variations on themes of other types.

work that marks a great deal of the other music in these collections.

The preludes ('Praeludium' is the usual title) are indeed almost invariably nothing but mere casual running up and down the keyboard or equally casual strings of chords; they are, however, always very short. The fantasias vary much in character; sometimes, as in the case of Gibbons' fine 'Fantazia of foure parts' in *Parthenia*, or in certain examples in the Fitzwilliam book by Philipps and others, which show something like definite fugal texture of an elementary type, the workmanship is essentially choral in character and grave and dignified in tone, sometimes—as in an example by Morley (Fitzwilliam Collection, No. 124)—the music contains nothing but essentially instrumental figures and somewhat vague florid passages. As a rule, however, the fantasias strike a sort of mean between these extremes; the numerous examples by Giles Farnaby are (like those just mentioned), practically the heralds of instrumental fugues, inasmuch as they start in the 'subject and answer' manner which later customs made orthodox, but at the same time they show their divergence from choral methods in occasional introduction of rapid ornamentation. Some pieces by Philipps are specially clear and well-designed, but the counterpoint of most of these fantasias is, as a rule, of a somewhat uncertain character; the subjects rarely recur in any recognizable form, and the pieces, considered as wholes, are very loose in texture. Indeed, even in the massive fantasia by Gibbons to which reference has just been made, though there is no sort of definitely instrumental effect from first to last, we nevertheless see the technical relaxation of style in several passages which, like many places in Mendelssohn's pianoforte fugues, cannot by any ingenuity be scored in separate parts. A special kind of this contrapuntal fantasia is shown in the pieces by Bull, Byrd, and others on the favourite 'Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la' formula—the first six notes of the scale repeated in various positions<sup>1</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> A curious modern survival may be noted in the opening bars of one of the best-known of Hungarian folk-melodies, occurring in one of Liszt's most familiar rhapsodies, and in Korbay's collection to the words 'Far and high the cranes give cry.'



in these we see the nearest approach to persistency of subject that the music of these collections shows, as the formula runs like a connecting thread throughout the whole, though its shortness and lack of thematic distinctiveness militate against the effect. An example by Bull in the Fitzwilliam book (No. 51) is of special interest by reason of the extreme ingenuity with which the formula is made to appear in many different keys, the method involving rapid modulations, the notation of which is at times complicatedly enharmonic; this piece is indeed remarkable on many grounds, showing that (unless Elizabethan ears were extraordinarily insensitive) some kind of approach to equal temperament must have been known,<sup>1</sup> and also containing a section of extremely complex cross-rhythms that is a belated survival of the 'proportional system' common in the church music of the earlier centuries.<sup>2</sup> On the whole, this fantasia is more curious than artistic, in spite of Bull's distinct feeling for structural balance shown in the emphasizing of the main key after all the modulations; Byrd's two pieces on the same six notes (Fitzwilliam book, Nos. 101 and 102) show considerably more musical feeling and some rather subtle development of the theme, and in Byrd's fantasia called 'The Bells' we can also see how he could make something out of unpromising materials—in this case merely strings of notes of different lengths contrapuntally combined in such manner as to suggest, very effectively in its way, a peal of bells of different sizes, rung unequally. The virginal books show a few other examples of this sort of early programme-music; but this bright if over-long piece is certainly the best. The third to the fifth numbers of the Nevill Collection consist of a sort of little suite known as 'Mr. Byrd's Battle', including sections respectively entitled 'The Marche before the battell', 'The Souldiers Sommons: the Marche of Footemen', 'The Marche of Horsmen', 'The Trumpetts', 'The Irishe Marche', 'The Bagpipe', 'The Drone', 'The Flute

<sup>1</sup> The passage is, however, probably unique, and all our evidence goes to show that keyed instruments were tuned on the old rigidly scientific system for long afterwards. Perhaps it may be merely a wild cacophonous experiment of a man who certainly was never artistically timid.

<sup>2</sup> See Wooldridge, *The Polyphonic Period*, ii. pp. 202-10, for an account of these rhythmical methods.

and the Droome', 'The Marche to the Fight', 'The Retreat', 'The Galliarde for the Victorie'; but this innocently playful production is of no more than historical interest. Another equally futile work, from the artistic point of view, is a fantasia in the Fitzwilliam book by John Mundy<sup>1</sup> describing 'Faire Wether', 'Lightning', 'Thunder', 'Calme Wether', in vaguely alternating little sections of a totally informulate character, ending with five bars to depict 'A Cleare Day'.

We may briefly pass over the versions of madrigals of Marenzio, Lassus, &c., most of which are by Philipps: they are as a rule mere transcriptions of the voice-parts, except that the long notes are curiously ornamented with turns and trills, and that the larger intervals are often filled up with semi-quavers. This indefinite kind of work had in it no germ of anything artistically worthy; but the variations, which are on the whole the most interesting branch of all the virginal music, demand more notice. It was natural that composers should turn to the variation-form when desiring to write pieces as far as possible on purely instrumental lines and also of some length; the contrapuntal fantasias, however non-vocal in ornamental detail, were nevertheless based on choral tradition, and the little dance-tunes and fancy-pieces were not sufficiently important always to satisfy composer and listener. So there grew up a form of instrumental music consisting of variations, frequently very many in number, on some well-known melody by a contemporary composer, some extract from ecclesiastical plainsong, or, more frequently, one of the delightful secular popular songs of the time, such as 'The Carman's Whistle', 'Bonny Sweet Robin', 'Walsingham', 'All in a garden green', and very many more<sup>2</sup>—variations on dance-tunes and on 'grounds' are also occasionally met with. It has been suggested that the variations on the liturgical melodies of the Church were written for the organ, not the virginals, and this is no

<sup>1</sup> In Parry's *Music of the Seventeenth Century*, p. 95, this piece is ascribed to Tomkins, probably by a mere slip of the pen, as there seems no evidence to invalidate the authorship named in the MS. But the transcriber was no doubt careless: for example, he copies a set of variations twice (Nos. 9 and 42) and ascribes them once to Mundy and once to Morley.

<sup>2</sup> Some account of the popular tunes of the period will be given later (chapter xii).



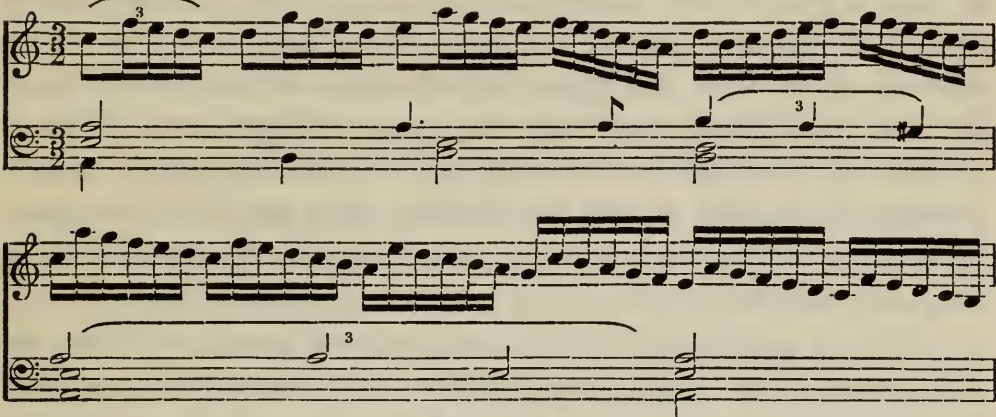
doubt true as regards the composer's primary intention ; but nevertheless, except for the fact that the subject itself is not ornamented, there is really not the least essential difference in style between, for example, Bull's treatments of 'Salvator Mundi' and 'The King's hunt'. In both we see great ingenuity in devising brilliant instrumental passages which, within the limits necessitated by the harmonic language of the time, are effectively varied and contrasted, and anyhow show a curiously speculative and daring mind ; but the themes are never developed except from this point of view of the purely technical virtuoso. Anything like emotional expression, apart from words, was practically unknown ; and, the art not being yet ripe for the higher developments of instrumental form, composers were necessarily thrown back upon virtuosity as the primary interest. No doubt composers differed much in their reliance on mere finger-work ; a good many of the variations of Bull have practically no other interest, and some (such as those in the Fitzwilliam Collection on 'Walsingham' and on 'Ut re mi fa sol la'—No. 215<sup>1</sup>) seem to have been designed for no other purpose than to show to what dazzling heights performers could rise—the very difficult and brilliant fireworks of the latter are really curiously modern in many ways. But others, especially Byrd, while not rivalling Bull in his precocious instinct for keyboard effectiveness, managed, while devising their variations on the general principle of more or less rapid successions of notes in different forms, to give occasional glimpses of a subtler idea of transmutation of the character of the theme ; these attempts are not at all common, and when they do show themselves are usually very transient, but still they are evidence that some composers had notions of variations that should not be merely more or less mechanically technical in character. Not, indeed, that we should judge the empty meanderings of Bull or his followers too hardly ; the frank delight in the merely, so to speak, physical capabilities of an instrument is historically a necessary precursor to the understanding of its less superficial possibilities, and,

<sup>1</sup> This is not the same as the fantasia previously mentioned ; it is a string of technical variations on the phrase of six notes ascending and descending so as to form a sort of little tune that never changes.

after all, Bull's passages never sink to the level of later things like the 'Alberti bass,' and similar lazy makeshifts which sinned against a known ideal. Perhaps a bar or two of one of Bull's typical variations (No. 22 of those on 'Walsingham') may be quoted as an example of his style—

No. 47.

[Brilliant]

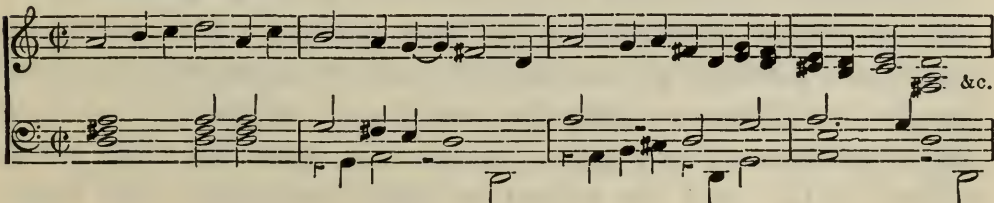


&c., with the semiquavers transferred to the left hand.

The four men who figure most prominently in all this music are Bull, Byrd, Gibbons, and Giles Farnaby—Bull, the daring virtuoso, with extraordinary insight into the future, but with only a scanty endowment of real musicianship—Byrd, the rather austere and angular genius, occasionally unbending very delightfully, but as a rule showing here, as in his secular madrigals, that his heart was really elsewhere, and probably rather despising the public that welcomed him chiefly as a brilliant performer—Gibbons, massive and dignified, with a vein of tenderness appearing from time to time, but on the whole a little too solid for the material and the instrument at his command—and Farnaby, less capable in a way than the other three, but gifted with a sort of quaint romanticism of style that is now and then curiously modern in outlook, causing indeed the little pieces called his 'Dreame'—

No. 48.

[Moderately slow]





his 'Rest', and his 'Humour' to sound like a forecast, in lace ruffles, of the *Kinderscenen* of Schumann (the way in which the 'Ut, re, mi' formula creeps into the third is quite in the style of the later composer's jests). No one can fail to admire much in the work of these men, especially the three latter; but still, however much we appreciate the delicate charm of some of these pieces, we cannot help recognizing the enormous gap in distinctiveness of material and maturity of handling between them and the great choral work of the same period. At the present day we sing the music of Byrd and Gibbons because it was written for all time; we play their music because it recalls to us, as nothing else can, the transient fashions of a day that is past. The interest of the one is in the main artistic, of the other in the main historical.

And this applies also to the instrumental music written not for virginals or organ—or for the lute (artistically a very unsatisfactory instrument beyond the limits of accompaniment work)—but for viols. Gibbons' 'Fantasies' for three viols are the only important original compositions for stringed instruments during this period, from the very close of which they, indeed, date. No doubt they were suggested by the inadequacy of the transcribed madrigals from the point of view of instrumental expression; on the keyed instruments composers had made extraordinary progress towards a technique entirely unconnected with vocal music, and it was only natural that some attempt should be made to treat viols as instruments with a special nature of their own. Gibbons' 'Fantasies' are, however, merely the heralds of the very numerous 'Fancies' that lesser composers produced by shoals in the succeeding period; but nevertheless we cannot help noticing how, even with so great a man as Gibbons, the style seems tentative, and lacking either in the bold experimentalism of much of the music for virginals, or, still more, in the consciously mature co-ordination of means and ends that is so palpable in the vocal works. No doubt in Gibbons' music for viols there are occasional passages which are non-vocal in character, occasional rhythmical features which demand the sort of incisiveness that only instruments can give; but at the same time the atmosphere of the 'apt for voices or viols' madrigals still hangs

round them. Out of the nine one indeed (No. 6) has a definite sort of form, balanced in a way that suggests ternary structure—the occurrence of the same section at both beginning and end, with more or less contrasting material in the middle; but in the others there is, as a rule, hardly anything that can really be called a strongly marked subject. Seven of the nine begin in a definitely fugal manner, but there is no persistence of theme; the music flows on in an aimless sort of way, and there seems little reason why it should at any bar turn in one direction more than in another. It is true that these pieces of Gibbons, unlike the vast majority of the later Fancies, are marked by real dignity and solidity of style; the workmanship is elevated and serious, and there is none of the sound for mere sound's sake that we find not infrequently in the other instrumental music of the period. But still there is really no adequate differentiation of instrumental and vocal methods; all this contrapuntal writing for the viols inevitably suggests the madrigals and motets and anthems, and we feel that though Gibbons is trying to write something non-vocal in character, he yet does not succeed in producing much more than a decidedly dry and dull imitation of his great choral style.

And if Gibbons could not succeed, still less could the other contemporary writers for viols. They made curious attempts to be original and interesting; Este wrote a set of eight five-part Fancies (all purely contrapuntal and quite without any sort of differentiation of manner) bearing the quaint titles of 'Desperavi, Peccavi, Vidi, Poenitet, Credidi, Vixi, Triumphavi, Amavi', and Dowland's 'Lachrymae, or Seven Teares, figured in seven passionate Pavans', are among the most frequently mentioned of all compositions of the period. But it all comes to singularly little; though every now and then, as in some Pavans and Fancies by Okeover,<sup>1</sup> we see work that shows a certain amount of distinctiveness.

We may now attempt to sum up in a few brief sentences the results of our lengthy investigation of the music of the madrigalian period. In the departments of solo vocal and instrumental music the total achievement is slight; it was purely pioneer work, and very arresting in its way as is the

<sup>1</sup> See Nagel, ii. 164.



charm of not a few of the songs, still the touch is at present somewhat immature, and we feel some diffidence in claiming for them a cosmopolitan appeal. But so far as greatness consists in perfect handling of material, there can be no doubt that the concerted vocal music of the chief men of the time represents the supreme flower of English art; Purcell wrote nothing so flawless on an equally extended scale, and no later native composer can be even mentioned in the connexion. Limited by necessary historical conditions as their technical resources are, they can between them cover a wide range of emotional expression, and portray it from end to end with a subtle directness and a steady distinctiveness that place their work very high among the things worthy of permanent remembrance by musicians of all nationalities, and not least by their sometimes too forgetful countrymen. They can look in the face any composer who has ever lived; if they are not among the few supreme divinities, they are at any rate Titans among the earth-born.

## CHAPTER V

### MUSIC UNDER CHARLES I AND THE COMMONWEALTH

THE chief composers to be mentioned during this period are the two brothers William and Henry Lawes, Charles Coleman, John Wilson, John Jenkins, John Hilton the younger, Martin Peerson, Nicholas Laniere, William Child, Benjamin Rogers, Christopher Gibbons, and Matthew Lock.

William Lawes, the elder of the two brothers, was a pupil of Coperario; he became attached to the Chapel Royal in 1603, and was also one of the King's Musicians after the accession of Charles I in 1625. Though he must have been about sixty years of age, he joined the Royalist army at the outbreak of the Civil War, and was killed at the siege of Chester in 1645. His music consists principally of instrumental pieces and secular songs; but he also wrote a few anthems and psalms. His more famous brother Henry was born in 1595, and died in 1662. He was also a pupil of Coperario, and became a gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1626: he devoted himself chiefly to secular vocal music, and was held in the highest esteem by his contemporaries. Milton (for whose *Comus* he wrote the original music) and Herrick (many of whose songs he set) wrote poems praising him both as composer and performer.

Many other composers of this time similarly applied themselves principally to the writing of music for masques and other purposes of secular entertainment. Charles Coleman (who died probably in 1664), chamber musician to Charles I and composer to Charles II, is entirely known by such work, as also is Nicholas Laniere (1588-1666), 'Master of the King's Musick' to both the Charleses, and a versatile person, who was also a singer and a painter, and spent some years in Italy buying pictures for the Royal collection, as the agent of Charles I. John Wilson (1594-1673) was one of the court musicians to



Charles I, University Professor of Music at Oxford from 1656 to 1662, and afterwards gentleman of the Chapel Royal, in succession to Henry Lawes. He was also chiefly a composer of songs, but occasionally diverged into religious music, as in his *Psalterium Carolinum*,<sup>1</sup> settings for three voices, with organ or lute accompaniment, of passages from the Psalms.

Of Martin Peerson (died 1650) hardly anything is known, except that he was master of the children at St. Paul's Cathedral. His motets, published in 1630, have an organ accompaniment, and represent the transition from the madrigals to the later style; he had previously published some 'Airs and Dialogues', and was one of the contributors to Leighton's Tears or Lamentations, of which mention has been made in the last chapter. John Hilton the younger (1599-1657), parish clerk and organist of St. Margaret's, Westminster, wrote a small quantity of church and instrumental music, but is chiefly known by his 'Airs or Fa Las for three voices' (1627), and his collection of Catches, Rounds, and Canons (1652), by himself and other contemporary composers. Christopher Gibbons (1615-1676), the second son of the great Orlando, was organist of Winchester Cathedral from 1638 to 1644, and after the Restoration held similar posts at the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey. He wrote a considerable quantity of ecclesiastical and instrumental music, most of which still remains in manuscript; in 1659 he joined with Matthew Lock, fifteen years his junior, in the composition of the *Masque of Cupid and Death*.

John Jenkins (1592-1678) spent most of his life as a member of the households of aristocratic patrons, chiefly in Norfolk; he was a famous performer, and wrote a very large quantity of instrumental music, in addition to some songs and anthems. Benjamin Rogers (1614-1698), William Child (1606-1697), and Matthew Lock (1630-1677) form links between this period and the next. Rogers, like Jenkins, was in his day famous chiefly as an instrumental composer, but he is now best known by his ecclesiastical music, of which he wrote a large amount: he was at different times chorister and lay-clerk at St. George's Chapel,

<sup>1</sup> The sub-title is 'The Devotions of His Sacred Majesty in his solitudes and sufferings'.

Windsor, organist of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and organist of Magdalen College, Oxford. Most of his church music seems to have been written after the Restoration; most of his instrumental music before. William Child (a pupil of Bevin at Bristol), was organist of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and of the Chapel Royal; he was primarily a church composer, and wrote numerous services and anthems, as well as motets and psalms, but some secular songs and instrumental pieces are also in existence. Matthew Lock may almost be counted as a composer of the Restoration period, during which most of his work was written, but for certain traits which, as we shall see, connect him rather more closely with his elder than with his younger contemporaries. He started his musical life as a chorister of Exeter Cathedral, under Edward Gibbons (uncle of Christopher), and at the Restoration became 'composer-in-ordinary' to Charles II. His compositions were very numerous and varied, including anthems and other church music, songs and incidental music for plays, and suites and other instrumental works; he was also a fluent and acrimonious pamphleteer.

The 'new music' inaugurated in Italy at the close of the sixteenth century by Caccini and Monteverde and their school soon showed its results in England, though here the break with the past was gradual and, so to speak, friendly. The recitatives in Monteverde's operas are based on a definite rejection of all the ideals that inspired men like Palestrina and Marenzio; all ecclesiastical traditions and all the mighty polyphonic structures that the church musicians had laboriously raised to perfection were contemptuously cast aside, and the amateur reformers started afresh from what was very nearly the beginning of art. Apart from certain songs of Caccini (the least revolutionary of the company), the productions of these enthusiastic revivers of a hypothetical Greek art-form must have seemed no music at all in the eyes of the writers and the lovers of the great masterpieces of the older school; and, as a matter of fact, it was necessary, we can now see, for music to die in order that it might live again. One peak was conquered; to reach the summit of another a descent to the plain was inevitable. But in this transitional period the English com-



posers showed to the full extent the nationally characteristic dislike of violent methods ; like the makers of the English Reformation, they compromised. The race of musicians of genius came, indeed, to an end in England as everywhere else ; but there was no deliberate denial of the old artistic faith. The ideal of emotionally exact expression of intense dramatic feeling, which led the Italians to write declamatory recitative devoid of all musical interest, never appealed to English musicians ; no one thought of setting tragic extracts from *King Lear* or *Macbeth* as Galilei set the story of Ugolino from Dante's *Inferno*, and no one here argued, as Count Bardi's coterie in Florence did from morning to night, about the nature of the stage music of the Greeks. No one here wished to make a clean sweep of his musical heritage ; no one dreamt that a new and glorious artistic heaven and earth would result if only the old rules about unprepared discords were once violated.

In the previous chapter we have seen, and remarked on, various signs of the coming change ; but it was not till the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century that the new order of things took even moderately clear form. The madrigals died hard ; but once an organ accompaniment, even if optional, were admitted—as in the publications of Peerson (1630)<sup>1</sup> and Porter (1632 and 1639)—the old form was extinct. The church music, it is true, drifted gradually into the new paths, but it was but little practised ; the solo vocal secular music was the chief, virtually the only line, on which the transition could firmly be based. The music-lovers of the generation before the Civil War found their chief enjoyment in the Masques, the origin of which has already been noticed. Popular as they had been in the reign of James I, they became more and more so under the auspices of his son ; indeed, Charles I seems himself to have possessed considerable taste for the fine arts. Nearly every year saw the production of a new masque, and in some years as many as four or five

<sup>1</sup> The title-page of Peerson's *Mottets, or Grave Chamber Music* says that they are 'fit for voyces and viols, with an organ part : which, for want of organs, may be performed on Virginals, Base-Lute, Bandora, or Irish Harp.' Some slightly earlier works of Philipps (published abroad) seem to show the earliest examples of the use of figured bass by an Englishman.

were brought to performance ; occasionally they were simply excrescences on plays, after the model of the masque in *The Tempest*, but more frequently they were independent and self-contained works. The most famous, at least to us, is Milton's *Comus*, produced, with music by Henry Lawes, at Ludlow Castle in 1634 ; but Shirley and the other lingering upholders of the ideals of the Elizabethan drama brought out many works in which the traditions of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton, and the rest were faithfully carried on and combined with music by the brothers Lawes, Lanieri, and other composers of the time. These masques (to the actual music of which we shall return later) were in no sense a new departure, as the Italian opera was. Dramatically, the form was a natural development, and musically it was intimately connected with the great mass of lute-accompanied songs, themselves (as we have seen) to some extent an offshoot of folk-music. A folk-song of 1500, a song of Thomas Campion, and a song of Henry Lawes are all bound together by a clear and strong tie ; neither at this nor at any other time does English music show anything like an artificial, theoretical creation of a new method.

The Civil War, and the consequent supremacy of Puritanism, altered the artistic aspect of England very deeply. The services in churches and cathedrals were suppressed, the choirs disbanded, and, at any rate in some cases, the organs and the libraries were destroyed by the soldiers of the Parliament or (as at Norwich) by zealous townsfolk ; the blow to ecclesiastical music was very heavy, and there was no alleviation till the accession of Charles II. But, nevertheless, there were compensations ; and indeed the Puritans have often been gravely maligned. Cromwell and nearly all the leading Parliamentarians did their best to prevent actual destruction of instruments or of music ; in some cases, as at St. Paul's, York, Durham, and Lincoln Cathedrals, and certain colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, the organs (though they were forced to remain silent) were not even removed from the buildings, and no order to burn choir-books was ever authoritatively given. It is true that some extremists condemned music of every kind indiscriminately, and doubted the propriety even of



unisonous psalm-singing in public worship; but Cromwell himself and many of his chief supporters were ardent music-lovers, and the vast body of Puritans never for a moment questioned the lawfulness of the ordinary practice of the art, confining their prohibitions to profane music on the Sabbath, organs and choirs in churches, and stage plays.<sup>1</sup> Many, indeed—such as Prynne, the famous author of the virulent *Histriomastix*—while inveighing against what they considered the misuse of music, go out of their way to express their sense of the praiseworthiness of the art in itself;<sup>2</sup> and there is abundant evidence that, though some of the extremists looked askance at it, ordinary secular music, both vocal and instrumental, flourished greatly during this period. Probably it flourished all the more in consequence of the suppression of other branches of the art; composers, unable to write anthems or services, turned necessarily to songs and instrumental pieces. There had been very little actual publication of music under Charles I (the energy of the publishers of the madrigalian era was extinct), but in the ten years from 1650 to 1660 a great number of works issued from the press; and, indeed, we may fitly date the never-ceasing stream of English music publications from the Commonwealth. Numerous, however, as these works are, and valuable as is the evidence they afford of the widely-spread practice of music under the Puritan régime, artistically they come to very little; the taste of English composers had sadly degenerated in fifty years.

John Playford, who afterwards became clerk of the Temple Church, was the first regular music-publisher in England. In 1650 he brought out a collection of folk-tunes, entitled *The English Dancing Master*, edition after edition of which continued to appear far into the eighteenth century; at first it contained 104 dance-tunes, but later editions (which include some tunes that seem to be of foreign origin) were much

<sup>1</sup> Davey has collected (*History of English Music*, pp. 264-73, 303-5) a large amount of contemporary evidence to this effect. But the old stage idea of the Puritan, though supported by some earlier music historians, has now been long exploded.

<sup>2</sup> 'That Musicke of itselſe is lawfull, usefull, and commendable, no man, no Christian dares denie, since the Scriptures, Fathers, and generally all Christian, all Pagan authors extant, do with one consent averre it' (*Histriomastix*, p. 274, ed. 1633).

enlarged. This was his first publication, and the great success of it and *A Musical Banquet*—a miscellaneous collection of rounds and catches and pieces for viols, issued in 1651—encouraged him to proceed in his venture; in 1653 he brought out the first edition of *An Introduction to the Skill of Music*, which remained a standard work for two or three generations, and, in addition to his new issues, he reprinted various older works, such as *Parthenia* and Michael Este's *Fantasies for viols*, besides selling 'remainders' of Elizabethan madrigals. The new publications included several volumes of 'Airs and Dialogues' by Henry Lawes and others (some being the work of several different composers), collections of rounds and canons, and of pieces for viols or virginals, with some theoretical treatises: altogether, in the years 1650–1659, thirty-four publications, most being of considerable size, appeared, contrasted with eleven during the whole reign of Charles I.

The evasion of the law prohibiting stage plays is one of the most striking features of this musical activity. No fresh masques of the old type seem to have been produced till 1659,<sup>1</sup> when Christopher Gibbons and Lock jointly set Shirley's masque of *Cupid and Death*; but before that time there had been several attempts towards theatrical entertainments, which did not technically need to be styled plays. In May, 1656, a sort of miscellaneous performance was given at Rutland House in London, with music by Henry Lawes, Coleman, Cook, and Hudson; this seems to have been an experiment to discover whether operas would be permitted, and, no objection being raised, the opera of *The Siege of Rhodes*, to a libretto by Davenant, and with music by Lock in addition to the four others just named, was produced in the following August. There were twelve singers, and six instrumentalists, and the advertisement claimed that they and the five composers were 'the most transcendent in England in that art, and perhaps not unequal to the best masters abroad'. Another opera, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru*, was performed at 'the Cockpit, in Drury Lane', every afternoon for some time in 1658, and we hear of

<sup>1</sup> This is the date on the MS. of the music; but the words were written some years earlier.



other operas which also perhaps were given daily ; but at the Restoration, when stage plays again came into fashion, these operatic compromises fell temporarily into disuse.

Small as was the quantity of ecclesiastical music produced during this period, Barnard's 'Selected Church Music,' published in 1641, is nevertheless one of the most important collections that we possess. The compiler was a minor canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, and an ardent admirer of the great style that was rapidly passing away ; his selection includes Services (nearly all complete) by Tallis, Stogers, Bevin, Byrd, William Mundy, Parsons, Morley, Gyles, Orlando Gibbons, and Woodson—several of these being represented by more than one work—forty-two Full Anthems by Tallis, Tye, Byrd, Hooper, Farrant, Shepherd, W. Mundy, O. Gibbons, Batten, Whyte, Gyles, Parsons, and Weelkes, and twelve Verse Anthems by Byrd, Ward, W. Mundy, Morley, O. Gibbons, Batten, and Bull. Barnard issued his work in ten part-books ; no cathedral or library now possesses a complete set, but the British Museum has a manuscript score made from a collation of part-books from different libraries, aided by an organ-book of Batten. He had the intention of supplementing this compilation with another devoted to living composers ; but the Civil War put a stop to his researches, and, indeed, the volumes we have were brought out only just in time. Apart from Barnard's work, these thirty-five years show very few issues of ecclesiastical music ; there are a few volumes of 'Choice Psalms' by Child and the brothers Lawes, and one or two other things, besides several Psalters with tunes.

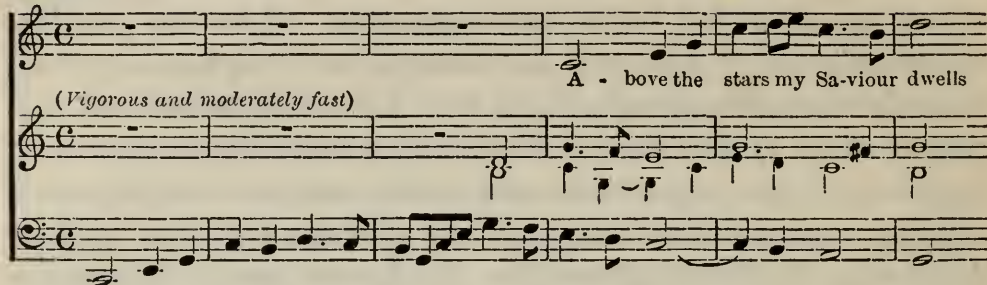
Though the composers who were in the prime of life during this period, and are therefore included in this chapter, produced the majority of their church music after the Restoration, it yet seems on the whole most convenient to mention it here. And, indeed, though both Child and Rogers lived to be over eighty years of age, and consequently outlived Purcell himself, who was only two years old when the Commonwealth came to an end, yet we can see in their work, and especially in that of Child, traces of the transitional period that are not visible in the anthems of the true Restorationists like Purcell or Blow or Wise or Humfrey.

Of the Anglican service music produced during Charles I's reign, which was very small in extent, the best example remaining is William Lawes' anthem, 'The Lord is my light,' which was included in Boyce's collection. Here the massive ecclesiasticism of Gibbons has altogether disappeared; the work is simple and melodious, and has strong echoes of the secular style of the time. But it is, nevertheless, clean and dignified; there are no forecasts of the methods which were popular a generation later, and the anthem is, in its rather slight way, distinctly attractive. Lock was another composer of rather later date, who, while devoting himself chiefly to secular work, produced a few anthems, most of which are still unpublished. 'Lord, let me know mine end', 'How doth the city sit solitary', or 'O give thanks' are all earnest work, showing attempts at emotional expression, which, if somewhat aimless and meandering, are yet not at all without interest. They sound like sincere endeavours to do something outside their composer's natural methods: 'O give thanks' is, perhaps, the best, and, indeed, the florid recitatives *in tempo* for the bass voice, followed each time by the refrain 'for his mercy endureth for ever' for the upper voices, are quite good and effective, as is also the way in which all the voices join at the end. But still, compared with even the less important anthems of the previous period, Lock's work comes to very little; the old order had gone and the men to lead the new had not yet arrived. Christopher Gibbons is another of these transitional figures; he has suffered the usual neglect which attaches to the son of an incalculably greater father, and very few of his compositions seem to have been published. But he is worthy of being better known than he is; in some ways, indeed, his anthems are more transitional than those of either William Lawes or Lock, inasmuch as, confining himself mainly to religious music, he has not, as they have, a fairly strong secular method on which to fall back. He wanders rather ineffectually between reminiscences of his father's style and echoes of the new church music that the younger men were writing for the French-loving Court; but though the result of this vacillation is that hardly any work of his is really satisfactory all through, yet he often strikes forcible and expressive, if isolated,



notes of his own. Occasionally, as at the opening of 'Above the stars my Saviour dwells'—

No. 49.



[The small notes in this and subsequent examples represent the necessary harmonization left, according to contemporary custom, to be inserted by the performer.]

he drops into a phrase which shows real power, and, we might almost say, grandeur; but then he will diverge into vagueness, and write roulades on the word 'and' in the middle of an otherwise quite sedate passage and perpetrate other things which show his curiously mixed state of mind. But he does not by any means deserve his present total neglect.<sup>1</sup>

Child's earliest sacred publication was a book of 'Choice Psalms' for three solo voices, with organ or theorbo-lute accompaniment, issued in 1639. They may be considered as in some respects forming a bridge between the verse-anthems of the madrigalian era and those of the Restoration; but in essentials they are far closer to the latter. The attempts at direct expressiveness forecast those of Humfrey thirty years afterwards, and the curious and rather crude realism of the florid settings of words like 'O thou most *high*,' or 'That she should *fly* as a bird' has also many parallels in the work of the next generation. The music is essentially declamatory, as that of the older composers never was; but at the same time there is dignity and restraint, and nothing too obviously secular. But in the better known works of Child's later years we see, on the whole, a declension of ideal; in earlier days he could never have penned a work like the anthem 'Praise the Lord, O my soul', scrappy and altogether undistinguished, with an unpleasant sort of air of conscious modernity about it, and a poor 'gabbling Hallelujah'<sup>2</sup> at the end—

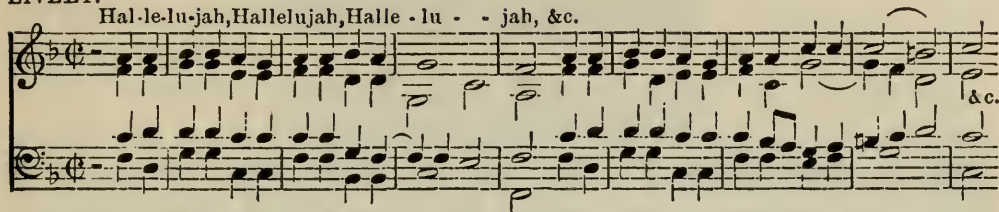
<sup>1</sup> The Christ Church Library is specially rich in MSS. of his.

<sup>2</sup> This expressive phrase is quoted from Parry's *Music of the Seventeenth*

No. 50.

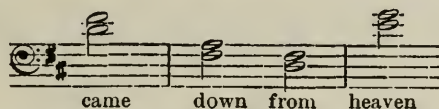
LIVELY.

Hal-le-lu-jah, Hallelujah, Halle - lu - - jah, &c.



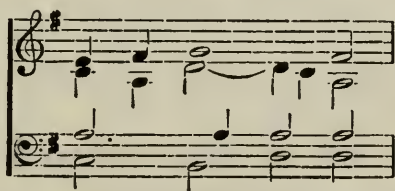
Child was indeed too advanced in years when the new style was introduced to assimilate it thoroughly; his Psalms had broken with the old traditions, but his attempts to write 'cheerful music' of the new fashionable kind are usually somewhat forced. Occasionally, as in the seven-part anthem 'Sing we merrily unto God', or in the E minor service, he makes a heroic endeavour to fuse the best elements of the old and new in one; and, in spite of lapses here and there, he manages it very successfully, though anyhow, in comparison with the work of men like Orlando Gibbons, the result is distinctly weak. As a rule, Child's Restoration work shows him trying to fit himself to his times without a very clear idea of how to set about the process; he tries to paint individual words without any of the musical interest that mere vocalization may sometimes give to florid realism, as in this extract from the Creed of the Service in D—

No. 51.



or makes cacophonous harmonic experiments of his own, as in the Magnificat from the Service in E minor—

No. 51a.

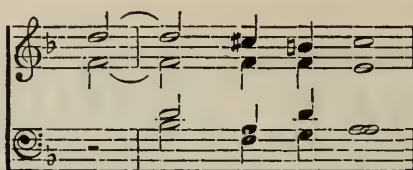


or clothes sixteenth-century formulae in singularly incongruous trappings, as in this from the anthem 'O Lord, grant the king a long life'—

*Century*, p. 272; he does not, however, mention this peculiarly typical instance.



No. 52.



Indeed, musicianly as he can be when the necessity of being up-to-date is not before his eyes, Child could only be counted as a distinctly second-rate composer were it not for his practically unknown motets, chiefly Latin, of uncertain but most probably pre-Restoration date;<sup>1</sup> in some of these, however, he shows himself as a really great man. The opening of 'Exsurge, quare obdormis, Domine?' where the overlapping voices rise in passionate cries, and then sink suddenly to low dead murmurs, is most striking and dramatic, and at the same time full of the massive dignity of the Elizabethan time; and 'O bone Jesu', of which we may quote the beautiful end—

No. 53.

[*Slow and soft*] O dul-cis-si-me, dul-cis-si-me Je-su, &c.

is full, from first to last, of real, solemn feeling expressed in modern but perfectly congruous terms. It is, indeed, astounding to think that the same man could write these motets,

<sup>1</sup> These have been strangely neglected, and remain, so far as I have been able to discover, unpublished; it was by mere accident that I myself came across them while researching among the MSS. in the Christ Church Library. Some are in part-books, others in score; some are unaccompanied, while others have an instrumental bass.

which, unequal though they may be, are, at their best, nobly imagined work, and also the 'Hallelujah' which we have already quoted.

The anthems and services of Rogers, on the other hand, afford no such problems. Though an almost exact contemporary of Child, and, therefore, also a great deal older than the leading Restoration composers, Rogers is more resolutely an adherent of the new order,<sup>1</sup> and his work shows none of Child's vacillation; he is a much more equable composer, and though never attaining anything like the height of Child's motets, never sinks quite so low. Still, we notice in some works, such as his Service in D, or his anthem 'Teach me, O Lord', a certain sort of dignified if somewhat dull solidity that shows that he was after all a son of the age of Gibbons; the old traditions died hard, and even in the work of a thoroughly unimaginative composer like Rogers they still faintly linger. As we shall shortly see, the great geniuses of the new time, men like Purcell and Blow, could, when they pleased, write massive contrapuntal work of the highest kind, but with them it was a spontaneous effort; when Child and Rogers abandon their attempts to be melodiously attractive, and endeavour to copy the 'grand style', the results almost always sound like rather unwilling reminiscences of the dominating traditions of their boyhood.

We might have imagined that the new methods of secular art, the external forms of which have already been described, would have resulted in something which, by its melodic and rhythmical attractiveness, would compensate, more or less adequately, for the loss of the older type; but when we examine the musical output of this time, in the secular as well as in the ecclesiastical field, our main feeling is one of great disappointment. We read Milton's sonnet 'To Mr. H. Lawes on the Publishing his *Airs*'—

Harry, whose tuneful and well-measur'd song  
First taught our English music how to span  
Words with just note and accent, not to scan  
With Midas' ears, committing short and long—

<sup>1</sup> He seems to have confined himself almost entirely to instrumental music in his earlier life.



but, on looking into the *Airs* for ourselves, find it very hard to see anything to justify such enthusiasm. It is grossly untrue to say that Lawes was the first English composer to accentuate his words rightly; all the great madrigal writers (if we criticize their music, as we needs must, without allowing ourselves to be disturbed by any fettering idea of bar-lines) had as keen a sense of 'just note and accent' as could be wished now, three hundred years later, and by their side Lawes and his contemporaries are merely muddle-headed amateurs.<sup>1</sup> All that these innovators attempted was to follow as closely as they could the rhythmical outlines of non-musical speech; they listened to their poet-friends reading their own verses, and then tried to produce artificially exact imitations in musical notes. From the artistic point of view, such proceedings are of course hopeless at the outset; they attempt to combine incommensurable things. And indeed Lawes, like all his followers, is not self-consistent; sometimes he pulls up at the end of each line, after the fashion of the elementary reciter <sup>2</sup>—

No. 55.

It is not that I love you less Than when be · fore your feet I lay,

#3 4

But to pre · vent the sad en · crease Of hope · less love I keep a · way.

<sup>1</sup> Farmer, in his preface to his madrigals of 1599, claims that he 'has so fully linked his music to number, as each to give to other their true effect, which is to move delight.' The beginning of his 'You pretty flowers'—

No. 54.

You pret · ty flowers, that smile for sum · mer's sake

can only be blamed by critics whose rhythmical sense is uncultivated.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Blow's well-known setting of these words.

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sometimes he rambles on with absolute vagueness, following another equally elementary model (the doubled bar is quite common in the music of the period, especially in cadences)—

No. 56.

Im - bre la - chry - ma - runi lar - go ge - nas spar - go, qua - vis au - ro - ra;

(A sharp to the 5 is obviously a misprint.)

De - us ci - to tu ve - ni - to nunc, nunc si - ne mo - ra,

\* (A crotchet in the original.)

sometimes, as in the *Comus* songs, he copies reading of a cultured kind, and sometimes (indeed, quite frequently) he gives up his unnecessary problem altogether, and writes music which, whether declamatory or lyrical, has no conscious concern with merely literary considerations. In this last vein Lawes is at his best, and often writes music which, slender as it is, possesses a charming fragrance of style, as, for example, this song, 'To his Mistress, upon his going to travell,' from the 'Airs and Dialogues' of 1653—

No. 57.

[Moderate]

Dear - est do not now . . . de - lay me, Since thou know'st I

must be . . . gone; Wind and tide 'tis . thought doth stay me,





Historically, no doubt, these songs of Lawes are the direct precursors of the solo vocal work of the end of the century ; but Purcell's declamatory rhapsodies show a largeness and mastery of handling to which these earlier composers never even approximately aspired.

Henry Lawes was much the most famous composer of his day, but it is very hard for us to see any qualities in his work which differentiate it in any noteworthy manner from that of his brother William, or Lanieri, or Coleman, or Wilson, or, indeed, several others ; in all there is the same attempt at refined expressiveness, the same slightness of technique, the same occasional charm and more frequent dullness. All, in addition to the songs (whether independent or forming part of masques), also wrote numerous monologues and dialogues, which resemble more closely than any other English music does the Italian 'nuova musica' at the beginning of the century, insomuch as they strive to portray, for purely domestic use, histrionic or semi-histrionic situations of a classical, allegorical, or pastoral character ; in the collections of the period we frequently find such items as a Lament of Venus over the body of Adonis, or of Ariadne when deserted by Theseus in Naxos, or dialogues between Charon and Philomel, between Time and a Pilgrim, between Cleon and Caelia or Sylvia and Thyrsis. Sometimes these innocent attempts at a sort of dramatic *vraisemblance* become almost comic, as, for example, in a Pastoral Dialogue, 'Did you not once, Lucinda,' by Coleman, where the bass voice explosively interjects the one word 'No!' at regular intervals ; but, in the main, there are no differ-

ences between the styles of these pieces and of the songs, except that the purely lyrical view is very rarely, if ever, perceptible, even momentarily.

In the Masque of *Cupid and Death*, the joint work of Christopher Gibbons and Lock, and in Lock's opera of *Psyche*, which, though produced during the reign of Charles II, belongs in musical essentials to the earlier period, we see this transitional style in its most ambitious shape. The former is, perhaps, the most elaborate of all extant masques, and contains, in addition to a large number of dances and other short instrumental pieces, some of which are very quaint and interesting, vocal music of all kinds—songs, both lyrical and florid, more or less declamatory recitative-like movements, and choruses, which are usually combined with solo work. The music to *Cupid and Death* does not seem ever to have been printed; but Lock's *Psyche* was published in 1675, along with some instrumental incidental music to *The Tempest*, in which occurs a somewhat remarkable 'Curtain Tune', designed on an extended basis of a long *crescendo* and *accelerando* followed by a long *diminuendo* and *rallentando*, obviously dramatic in intention, and by no means unsuccessful. *Psyche* itself, though styled an opera,<sup>1</sup> is to all intents and purposes designed on the same general lines as the pre-Restoration masques; occasionally there are tunes which forecast to some extent the melodic style of Purcell, as, for example, the fine swinging 'Song at the Treat of Cupid and Psyche' in Act iii, 'All joy to fair Psyche,' and the choruses are generally more or less simple and straightforward in manner, but, as a rule, Lock rambles along exactly in the general style of Lawes, and the fact that the work is designed for public stage presentation and not, like the old masques, for domestic use, does not make the least difference. Sometimes, however, there are attempts at complex work of a type to which the amateurish talent of Lawes never aspired; a little chorus of devils in Act v is in six parts, and in the 'Scene in the Rocky Desart' the 'two Despairing Men' and the 'two Despairing Women,' after

<sup>1</sup> The long preface, in which the composer—who had obviously an excellent conceit of himself—expounds the meaning which he attaches to the term, and all sorts of other things besides, is an amusing piece of vainglorious writing.

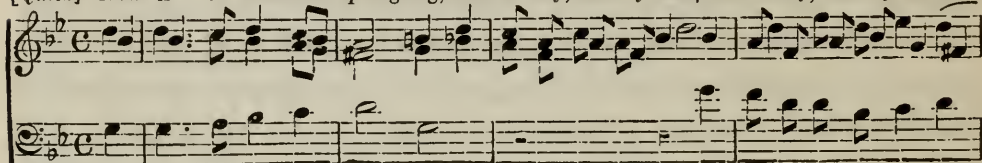


alternating phrases in the ordinary style, join in a sort of canon '4 in 1'—but the result (as also in the case of a canon '4 in 2' in the *Tempest* music) is rather uncomfortable, and certainly suggests that Lock was not at home in counterpoint.<sup>1</sup>

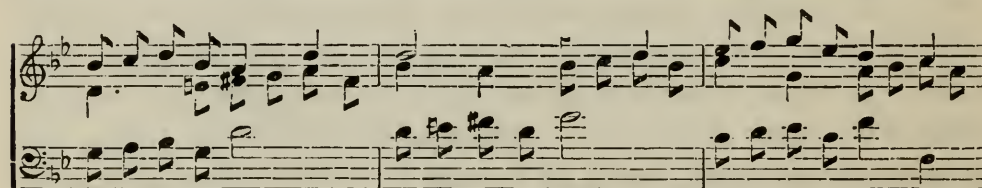
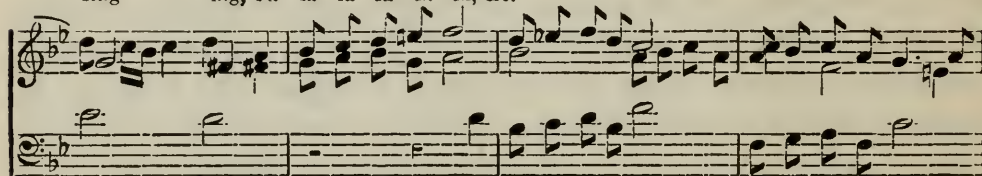
The sole work by any composer belonging to this period that attaches itself entirely to the madrigalian style, is the collection of 'Ayres or Fa Las' for three voices published by the younger Hilton—'the unripe firstfruits of my labours,' he calls them—in the year 1627, just at the close of the great time. These twenty-six pieces are full of dainty charm, and deserve to be much better known than they are; the variety of the Fa-la refrains (found in all except No. 17, 'When Flora frowns'), with their diverse rhythms and complicated cross-accents, is remarkable, and the best numbers, such as 'Fly, Philomel', 'Leave off, sad Philomel', or 'Now is the summer springing'—

No. 58.

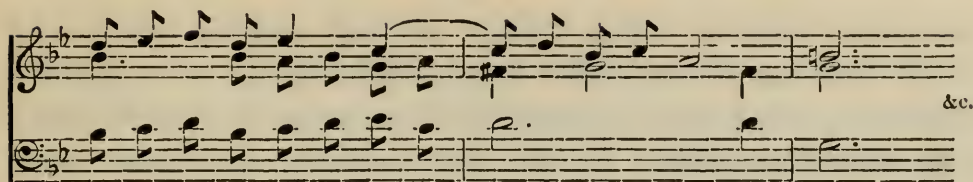
[Quick] Now is the sum-mer spring-ing, And mer-ry, mer-ry lads, and mer-ry, mer-ry lads are



sing - ing, Fa la la la la la, &c.



<sup>1</sup> The music to *Macbeth*, long supposed to be by Lock, is now generally held to be an early work of Purcell, in whose handwriting a score of it has been found. Anyhow, the music is by no means like Lock's ordinary style, being both, in a sense, more immature and also of a type showing more capacity for development: on the whole it is of a distinctly elementary, if promising, character, and it is a curious freak of fortune which has made it familiar to very many persons to whom the untold quantity of vastly better contemporary work is quite unknown.



are quite worthy of a place beside Morley's ballets, to which they bear, in general mood, a very strong resemblance. They are the last pure specimens of the style ; Peerson's collection of 1630, though capable of being sung unaccompanied, has an *ad libitum* organ part which introduces a different tone, and Walter Porter's so-called 'Madrigals and Ayres' of 1632 and 1639 (now lost) were furnished with 'Sinfonias, Toccatas, and Ritornellos in the Italian way', and consequently represent a final break with the past.

Hilton's name is now most familiar as the editor and part-composer of a collection of catches, rounds, and canons<sup>1</sup> published in 1652 under the title of 'Catch that catch can', many of which were reprinted from three collections issued by Thomas and William Ravenscroft in 1609-1611 with the fanciful names of 'Pammelia', 'Deuteromelia', and 'Melismata'. This purely secular development of the old ecclesiastical partiality for canonic writing had started at an early period in musical history ; even if we omit 'Sumer is i-cumen in' from our consideration, yet it is plain enough that such highly elaborate and rhythmically complex early work as the four-part round on the 'Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la' formula, or the five-part 'Come follow me' (both quoted by Hawkins), must have had many predecessors, even though nothing of the kind was published before 'Pammelia'. The Elizabethan dramas are full of allusions to the prevalence of catch-singing ; very often no doubt this was of the merest elementary kind, as shown in the trivial two-bar production 'Hold thy peace, thou knave', mentioned in *Twelfth Night*<sup>2</sup>, which must have been very well within the powers of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, even in their most convivial moods. But the Ravenscroft

<sup>1</sup> His delightful 'Come, follow me' is one of the most justly popular of all rounds.

<sup>2</sup> Printed by Hawkins ; it is called a three-part round, but not more than two voices are ever going at once.



collections contain many things of real artistic value, and 'Catch that catch can' gave the initial impulse to a popular movement which for a hundred years or more flooded England with miniature works in this form—many, no doubt, mere bacchanalian effusions remarkable for nothing except the ingenious impropriety of the words, but many others (such as, in the present period, William Lawes' stately and beautiful 'She weepeth sore'—perhaps the finest bit of work its composer ever produced), marked by musicianly feeling as well as technical skill, and, by the very nature of the medium, free from the rhythmical vagaries so often shown in the airs and dialogues.

The chief feature of the instrumental music during this period was the prevalence of 'Fancies'. The name had originally been given, about the middle of the sixteenth century, to pieces based, not on plainsong or on popular melodies, but on original material; and as a further distinction, the material had to be untinged with anything savouring of dance rhythms. We see the type at its best in Gibbons' Fantasies for viols, already mentioned in the last chapter; but with the close of the madrigalian era a great declension of style set in here as elsewhere. Jenkins, the most famous instrumental composer of the time, produced a vast number of Fancies, and Rogers, William Lawes, and many more, sedulously pursued the same paths; these pieces were written for various combinations of instruments, were frequently of great length and elaboration, and enjoyed unbounded popularity amongst their contemporaries. Now, however, one and all are virtually unreadable; they adopt Gibbons' vaguely contrapuntal methods, but altogether lack his solid musicianship. They bustle along with plenty of serious-minded energy; but there is no trace of inventiveness of any kind worth mentioning, and though in a sense they may be called the precursors of English concerted chamber-music, yet the special type vanished, never to reappear, directly the tide of aristocratic fashion turned. After the Restoration counterpoint was at a discount; and it was not till the time of Purcell that men began to see that instrumental work could be written which should combine learning with taste.

Apart from the Fancies, there were the Suites of dance-tunes,<sup>1</sup> sometimes consisting of twelve or more in a row; these, though much less ambitious, are, as a rule, somewhat more musical in result—at any rate in so far as they recognize the value of definite thematic material instead of mere academic tags. Jenkins, Rogers, Coleman, William Lawes, Lock, and others wrote large quantities of them; and they occasionally managed to produce pieces which, slight as they are, possess a sort of melodious courtliness that is not at all unattractive. But, when all is said, we find it nowadays difficult to subscribe to even a minute fraction of the eulogies which not only natives but foreigners passed on the mid-seventeenth century English instrumental style; it was a period of transition all over Europe, and for the time being the musical world seems to have been somewhat unnecessarily thankful for whatever it could get.

Indeed, it did not get particularly much in any field. Music had come to the determination, which was indeed no doubt inevitable, to do for the future without the ecclesiastical guidance under which it had risen to greatness; but it was some time before it could walk alone in a satisfactory manner. Abroad, the genius of a great man like Carissimi bridged the gap to some extent; in England we were perforce obliged to blunder as well as we could through the period between Gibbons and Purcell. We no doubt produced work possessing, in its more or less tentative way, many admirable qualities; but for over fifty years not one page of English music shows the hand of the perfectly assured master.

<sup>1</sup> The favourite 'Divisions on a Ground' for a solo *viola da gamba* are a sort of by-path, being merely technically effective florid variations on a bass, sometimes, indeed, as in the works of their chief exponent, Christopher Simpson (who was also the author of a treatise, *The Division Violist*), designed with considerable taste and skill.



## CHAPTER VI

### PURCELL AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

THE short life (1658 or 1659-1695) of Henry Purcell, perhaps the greatest genius of English-born composers, has, from the biographical point of view, but little interest or variety. He was the second son of Henry Purcell, a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, Master of the Choristers of Westminster Abbey, and a member of the King's Band, who died in 1664; his uncle Thomas, and his younger brother Daniel, were also musicians—the latter, indeed, who died in 1718, being one of some note—and the family talent descended to Edward the youngest son of the great Henry, and in a flickering manner to the fourth generation. The Purcell whose fame has extinguished that of his relatives entered the Chapel Royal as a chorister soon after his father's death, and studied successively under Cooke, Humfrey, and Blow; in 1680 he obtained the appointment of organist of Westminster Abbey, which he held till his death fifteen years later. His works are very numerous, and include masterpieces in every department of music practised in his time; he wrote twenty-nine odes (nine 'welcome songs' to Charles II and James II, six odes on Queen Mary's birthday, four odes for St. Cecilia's Day, and ten miscellaneous)—music for fifty-four stage plays, ranging from a few interpolated numbers to complete operas—a great mass of anthems, services, and miscellaneous vocal pieces with religious words (Vincent Novello's edition, which included all known in 1832, contains ninety-seven different works, and more have been discovered since)—another mass of secular songs, duets, trios, and catches—and instrumental music, including (besides the theatre overtures and airs) string sonatas in three and four parts, fantasias in three, four, five, six, and seven parts, organ pieces, and a large quantity of works of all kinds for harpsichord. Of all these, the only works published during the

composer's lifetime were the 'Sonatas of three parts' (1683), the earliest of the St. Cecilia odes (1684), the music to *Dioclesian* (1691), and some select songs from the music to *The Fairy Queen* (1692); his widow subsequently published 'Lessons for the Harpsichord' (1696), 'Airs for the Theatre'—a collection of instrumental pieces from the music to thirteen of the plays (1697), 'Sonatas of four parts' (1697), and a large selection of songs of various kinds issued under the title of *Orpheus Britannicus*, the first editions of the two books of which appeared in 1698 and 1702. Later editions of these brought forward still more songs; but then publication ceased for a long time, and even now a vast quantity of Purcell's music remains still in manuscript. The composer was also a theorist of distinction, as is shown in his elaborate work in the 1694 edition of Playford's publication 'An Introduction to the Skill of Music.'

Cooke, Humfrey, and Blow have been named as Purcell's teachers; Henry Cooke (usually styled 'Captain' in remembrance of his rank in the Royalist army during the Civil War), was Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal from 1660 till his death in 1672, and accordingly, though an indifferent composer himself, had the earliest training of all the greatest musicians of the time. Pelham Humfrey<sup>1</sup> (1647–1674) was one of Cooke's pupils; in 1664 he was sent abroad and pursued his studies in Paris under Lully (his expenses being defrayed by Charles II out of the 'Secret Service Fund'), and on his return in 1667 was appointed a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, succeeding on Cooke's death in 1672 to the post of Master of the Children. Though he died at the age of twenty-seven, he left behind him a large quantity of anthems and secular vocal music; while still a boy at the Chapel Royal, he had joined with his fellow-choristers Blow and Turner in the joint production of what is generally known as the 'Club-Anthem'. John Blow (1648–1708) was one year his junior, and joined the Chapel Royal as a chorister in the same year, 1660, studying under Hingston and Christopher Gibbons as well as under Cooke; in 1674 he succeeded Humfrey as Master of the

<sup>1</sup> This is his own spelling, but the name is found in several other forms—a late survival of the indifference common in earlier centuries.



Children at the Chapel Royal, with which in various capacities he was connected till his death. He was also organist of Westminster Abbey from 1669 to 1680, when he made room for his pupil Purcell, on whose death, in 1695, he resumed the post, and held it for the rest of his life. He was a very voluminous composer in every branch of music except the dramatic, for which he wrote but little; a great quantity of his work is still, however, unprinted. William Turner (1651-1740) the longest-lived of this group of composers, was a native of Oxford and a fellow-chorister of Humfrey and Blow at the Chapel Royal, of which he subsequently was appointed a gentleman, holding singing appointments also at St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey; his compositions consist chiefly of services and anthems. Michael Wise (c. 1648-1687) was another of 'Captain Cooke's boys', as they were called, and subsequently a gentleman of the Chapel Royal, and master of the choristers at St. Paul's Cathedral; his principal productions were also for church use. Thomas Tudway (died 1730) was yet another of this distinguished band of choristers; most of his later life was spent at Cambridge, where he was organist of Kings and Pembroke Colleges, and (from 1705) university professor. He composed a considerable quantity of church music, but is now best known by the six large manuscript volumes of 'Cathedral music' of various composers which he selected and edited.

Jeremiah Clarke was a Chapel Royal chorister under Blow, and cannot therefore have been born earlier than 1660; he held at various times the appointments of organist of Winchester Cathedral, organist, master of the children, and vicar-choral of St. Paul's Cathedral, and gentleman and organist of the Chapel Royal, composing numerous anthems, odes, and other vocal works, besides incidental music for plays, and pieces for harpsichord. In 1707 he committed suicide in a fit of despondency caused by a love-disappointment. John Goldwin (c. 1670-1719) was a pupil of Child, whom he succeeded in his post at St. George's Chapel, Windsor; his compositions are almost exclusively ecclesiastical.

Two amateur composers of the time deserve mention. Robert Creyghton (c. 1639-1734), was the son of the Cambridge University Greek Professor and Bishop of Bath and Wells,

and showed hereditary tendencies, succeeding his father in the professorship, and holding a canonry at Wells for sixty years. He was exclusively a composer of services and anthems, but Henry Aldrich (1647-1710), dean of Christ Church, Oxford, was more versatile, producing, in addition to his labours in both scholarship and architecture, secular vocal music as well as a quantity for church use, and acquiring a valuable musical library which he bequeathed to the college.

John Eccles (born about 1660, died 1735) is on the other hand known almost entirely by his music for dramatic pieces, though he occasionally attempted other styles. He started writing for the theatre in 1681, and wrote assiduously for many years: but in later life he abandoned all composition except of the official odes which his duties as Master of the King's Band required of him. The music to *Don Quixote* (1694) was the joint work of himself and Purcell.

The restoration in 1660 of the temporarily interrupted monarchical régime had an immediate bearing on the musical life of the country; the organs in the churches awoke from their long silence, and there was on all sides an eager activity to unearth the forgotten anthems and services, and to train up a new generation of choristers. The recovery did not take long; the old choir-books, though neglected, do not seem at all generally to have been destroyed, and in 1663 and 1664 James Clifford, a minor canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, published collections of the words of the anthems used there, which comprise several hundred specimens from the times of Tye and Whyte down to Humfrey and Blow, then mere children. But still the interregnum had done its work; it was not now possible for a church composer to revive the secret of the old style. The Puritan suppression of ecclesiastical music had given a powerful impulse towards secular forms; and when the Restoration composers began to write anthems and services, they found themselves irresistibly led to do so on lines much more akin to the declamatory solo songs than to the old continuous contrapuntal work. We have already seen, in the last chapter, the beginnings of this change in ecclesiastical music; but it was enormously accelerated by the régime of the Commonwealth.

The personal tastes of Charles II had, no doubt, very con-



siderable influence. In his residence abroad he had acquired a great liking for the new French music ; and one of his earliest acts after the new Chapel Royal had become firmly established was to send its most promising pupil, Pelham Humfrey, to study in Paris how to adapt the dramatic methods of Lully<sup>1</sup> to the English church service. He was also particularly fond of the violin—an instrument then virtually unknown in England, though common in France ; the band of twenty-four ‘violons du roy’ was an inseparable companion, and means had to be found for permitting it to play in the Chapel Royal services as well as in secular surroundings. And so a sort of authoritative standard of church music was set up, from which the former subjective religiousness was entirely absent ; what the king desired was declamatory expressiveness, skilful solo vocalization, instrumental interludes to which the royal hands and feet could beat time—indeed, these instrumental sections were often so long, and so entirely unconnected with the rest of the work, that the worshippers must have found great difficulty in realizing that they were listening to an ecclesiastical anthem at all. *Ritornelli*, as such, were not an absolute novelty (we find examples, though of a quite sedate and congruous type, in a considerable number of anthems of the madrigalian period), but the tone of the violins—‘better suiting a tavern or playhouse than the church,’ as Evelyn says in his diary—offended many persons who were quite ready to welcome the other features of the new style ; however, at Charles’ death they disappeared for good from the organ-loft, and even earlier they do not seem (if a remark of Tudway’s is trustworthy) to have been very much in evidence when the king himself was not present.<sup>2</sup> But the declamation and the general preference of solo to choral work were essential and sharply differentiating elements of the new order.

The reopening of the theatres did away with the necessity

<sup>1</sup> However, up to 1667, when Humfrey returned to England, Lully had written no operas, but only ballets.

<sup>2</sup> In the royal presence the violins seem to have struck up whenever there was a pause, whether the composer himself had written anything specially for them or not ; many Restoration anthems have no string accompaniments indicated, and even the remainder were no doubt sometimes performed merely with the organ, as invariably in later days.

for the subterfuges to which, as we have seen, the earliest English operas were indebted for their appearance; and consequently the opera, in the proper sense of the word, gave place to the tragedy or comedy with incidental music. In addition to the songs there was, however, a good deal of playing, both before the performance began, and between the acts; indeed many persons, we hear, used to come specially early so as not to miss the instrumental introductions. But, partial as contemporary taste was to declamation and quasi-dramatic dialogue in domestic vocal music, there seems to have been a feeling that ordinary conversational speech was unsuitable for musical setting on the stage; Dryden suggests that it should only be so employed when supernatural beings or lunatics are concerned. We cannot, however, draw any hard and fast line between such musically illustrated plays and operas in the proper sense; Purcell's music to *Dioclesian*, for example, is so extensive in amount, and so large in scope, that it virtually overbalances the rest of the play, and sometimes, as in the same composer's *Dido and Aeneas*, we find an example of an opera pure and simple, with all the dialogue set in recitative. Moreover, masques still continued in favour during this period, and indeed considerably longer, though not to anything like the same extent as in the earlier part of the seventeenth century; and here, as before, the music continued to be an altogether essential feature, though—apart from those imbedded in the plays set by Purcell—nothing of real artistic importance was produced in the form.

Besides all this stage music of various kinds to English words, we see at this time the first beginnings of foreign influence in the dramatic field. In 1660 an Italian named Gentileschi brought over a company which gave performances of the details of which we know nothing; two operas of the remarkable French composer Cambert seem to have been given at court between 1672 and 1677, and the opera *Ariadne of Louis Grabu*—an inferior protégé of Charles II—which was produced in 1674, was an adaptation of a French original. Indeed, quite apart from the king's own artistic circle, there was in his reign a rapid extension of the knowledge of both French and Italian music in England. Nicola Matteis, a dis-



tinguished Italian violinist, spread abroad the fame of Vitali and other celebrated composers of his native country; and there can be no doubt that Purcell and most of his contemporaries were strongly affected by these influences, at any rate in their instrumental works. At the same time Pietro Reggio, a fashionable singing-teacher, was making for his friends collections of Italian vocal music, through which the knowledge of men like Carissimi and Stradella became widely diffused; and there was also a more or less continuous stream of amateurs who travelled to Paris or Venice, and brought back with them news of the latest productions of Lully or Legrenzi. English music was in fact becoming a cosmopolitan art; though as yet there was not the very least sacrifice of anything individual in the endowment of our great composers.

The public concert, as an institution, dates in England from the Restoration period; previously music, unless ecclesiastical or dramatic in character (and even here nothing like a public appeal was made) had been essentially the art of a small friendly circle—a circle of fellow-performers even more than of listeners. The largesse of aristocratic patronage and the profits of publication were the composers' rewards, and the professional performer, as such, hardly as yet existed. But with the middle of the seventeenth century there came a change; the world of fashion tended more and more to be centralized in the metropolis, and, with the abandonment of the country coteries and quasi-feudal households of the nobility, the musician (unless attached to some provincial cathedral) found himself more and more obliged to be a Londoner, while the rapid advance of technical attainments, both instrumental and vocal, simultaneously produced a more marked differentiation between the professional and the amateur. It is in the latter years of the Commonwealth that we see the first signs of the new order; Oliver Cromwell gave State concerts at Whitehall, performances in London taverns seem, if we may judge from a passage near the beginning of Pepys' diary, to have been familiar occurrences, and at Oxford, where Anthony Wood's memoirs give us the picture of a vigorous musical life, weekly concerts were held in six of the colleges as well as in private houses. The remarkable playing

of Baltzar, a violinist from Lübeck, who came to England in 1658, and was, after the Restoration, appointed Master of the King's Band, gave a great impulse towards virtuosity; and his successor in the Mastership, John Banister, when dismissed owing to his injudicious preference of English to French violinists, started, in 1672, in a large room in Whitefriars, the first regular public concerts in England—music, both vocal and instrumental, was performed, according to the advertisement, 'by excellent masters' at four o'clock every afternoon, and the charge for admission was one shilling. Six years later Thomas Britton, an itinerant coal-dealer with a keen love for music, started at his house in Clerkenwell weekly concerts (at first open, afterwards with an annual subscription of ten shillings), which lasted till 1714, and grew gradually into very considerable fame (Handel was, in their last years, a frequent performer); while about 1680 a room in Villiers Street was opened, and became much in request for fashionable performances, and before the end of the century we hear of several more. These concerts came to a culmination in the celebrations of St. Cecilia's Day (November 22), of which we first hear in 1683, and subsequently every year (with two or three exceptions) till 1703, after which date they were only held occasionally; they were managed by a body called 'The Musical Society', which commissioned a distinguished poet to write an ode in praise of music, and a distinguished composer to set it. This was performed at an evening concert (first in the Villiers Street room and afterwards at Stationers' Hall); and, in addition to this, there was also, during the last ten years of the celebrations, a special morning service, with music of particular importance, at St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street. Among the poets who lent themselves to these occasions were Dryden, Congreve, and Addison, and among the composers Purcell, Blow, Turner, Clarke, Eccles, and Daniel Purcell<sup>1</sup>; and there is no doubt that they filled a very noteworthy place in the musical life of London.

<sup>1</sup> The celebrations after 1703 were of a much less regular character; Pope's well-known Ode was written in 1708, but not set till long afterwards. Handel reset, in 1736 and 1740, both of Dryden's odes, written for the 1697 and 1687 festivals.



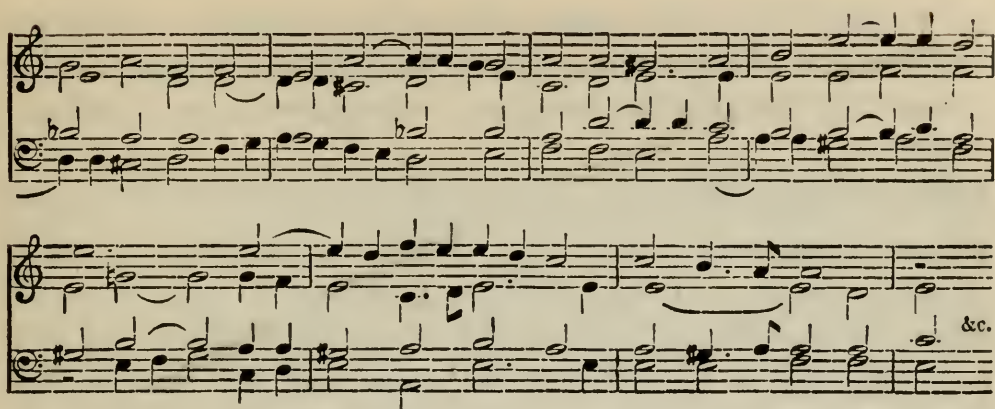
We may now proceed to discuss in some detail the actual music of the period. Blow, whose life covered the whole of it, is undoubtedly far the greatest of the Restoration composers, after his great pupil; and much of his church music is of really noble quality, though some of the best still remains unpublished. He is by no means free from the mannerisms and weaknesses common in greater or less degree to all his contemporaries, even Purcell himself; he is by no means an equal composer, and his harmonic and structural technique is not always that of the assured master. But the finest of his anthems show him as possessing notable power, expressiveness, and individuality of utterance: 'I beheld and lo' and 'I was in the spirit', which for some reason difficult to understand are his most generally familiar works, are, however, far from representing him at his best—clean and stately though they are, they lack the marked originality of many others. The Services in A, G, and E minor (especially the first) and anthems like 'God is our hope and strength', 'O sing unto God', or the six-part 'Sing we merrily', contain much that is Blow's own—massive vigour and direct expression, combined with a harmonic inventiveness that, in spite of an occasional lapse, is usually as successful as it is novel; we cannot, indeed, doubt that he gave Purcell the lead in many directions where the younger man specially distinguished himself. But, as a rule, we see Blow's church music at its finest in the anthems where the words afford opportunity for pathos and deep feeling. 'O Lord, I have sinned', 'O God, wherefore art thou absent', or 'My God, my God, look upon me'—

No. 59.

*[Slow and expressive]*

My God, my

God, look up-on me, why hast thou for-sa-ken me, &c.



contain a great deal of extremely touching music; the emotions are portrayed with tenderness and dignity, and the schemes are balanced and organic. Blow has, indeed, a singular gift for writing short phrases of quite exceptional expressiveness, as for example, the opening of 'How doth the city sit solitary'—

No. 60.

[*Very slow and expressive*]

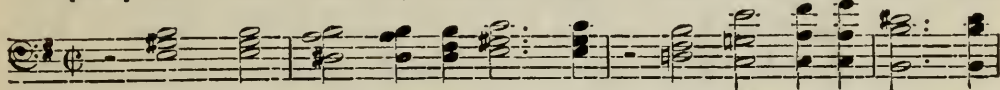
TENOR SOLO.

How doth the ci - ty sit so - li - ta - ry.

or this from 'Save me, O God'—

No. 61.

[*Slow*] I am wea - ry of cry - ing, am wea - ry of cry - ing.



or other things in 'Turn ye to me', and, indeed, many other anthems; and he sometimes, as at the end of both 'O Lord I have sinned' and 'My God, my God, look upon me', produces an effect of the greatest pathos by ending on a bare fifth—an effect, by the by, which is utterly ruined if the organist fills in either a major or a minor third on his own account.<sup>1</sup> Some little-known Latin motets also show him in his best form: the five-part 'Salvator mundi' is very powerful and massive, and four motets on ground-basses<sup>2</sup>—the first three

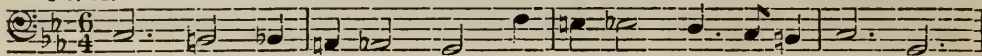
<sup>1</sup> Many editions are, regrettably, quite unreliable in this matter; and, indeed, too many organists appear to think that they ought always to be using as many fingers as possible when playing chords—a habit which plays appalling havoc with anything designed on artistic lines.

<sup>2</sup> No composers of any nationality in the whole history of music can come even approximately near the Englishmen of this period (especially



all on practically the same scale-subject, though in different keys—are most interesting, the fourth, ‘Cantate Domino,’ being a specially fine brilliant work on a strong, swinging rhythm—

No. 62.



Indeed, Blow's is really one of the outstanding names of English music ; it is not difficult, it is true, to point to works where he has nothing very special to say for himself, and he is not altogether to be relied on for sustaining the interest of a lengthy piece from start to finish, but there are things in the best of his sacred compositions which can very fairly stand comparison with any contemporary music of any nationality.

Blow's two most famous fellow-choristers, Humfrey and Wise, have left nothing behind them of such singular merit ; but as Humfrey died at the age of twenty-seven, it may fairly be argued that he might have been one of the great men had he lived to fulfil his early promise. The anthems ‘Have mercy upon me, O God’, ‘Hear ye heavens’, or ‘Like as the hart’, may be taken as typical of his style, but, indeed, it varied hardly at all ; in all his work we find a curious mixture of notable if not always perfectly convincing endeavours to be expressive and pathetic, combined with extreme scrappiness of structure, perfunctory instrumental interludes, and secular rhythms to which Charles II could beat time with his feet. Not infrequently he makes amateurish experiments in harmony, as in ‘Thou art my King, O God’, and in the same anthem anticipates the laziness of some composers of much later date in including an apology for a *fugato* in which there is never more than one voice at a time so long as there is any pretence of counterpoint. Humfrey might very probably have steadied himself as he grew older ; but, apart from certain pages here and there, where we see signs of something greater, his work leaves the impression of a highly talented but superficial youth, with whom desire for immediate popularity among the admirers of the new style was the strongest motive. Still, he was no doubt the pioneer of the declamatory and expressive church music, and he was

Purcell) in partiality for writing complete movements on recurrent bass figures. Possibly they borrowed it from Stradella, though he uses the method less frequently than they do.

a teacher of Purcell; and he might have done great things in opera, anyhow, had he lived. The opening of 'Like as the hart' may be quoted as a typical example of his style at its best—

No. 63.

[Moderate and with expression]

TEN. Like as the

hart de-sir-eth the wa-ter-brooks

BASS.

so long-eth my soul

af-ter thee, O God, &c.

Wise's anthems are more mature and never give, as some of Humfrey's do, the impression that the popular effect is the one thing needful; he has more affinity with the older composers, and is much less affected by dance-rhythms than Humfrey—while even when, as in the fresh, though very simple, 'Awake up my glory,' he drops into them, he is somehow more of a solid musician. The anthem 'Thy beauty, O Israel' shows him at



his best—the expression is well-devised and sincere, and the section for bass solo, ‘Ye mountains of Gilboa,’ is a really fine piece of declamation,—

No. 64.

[*Majestically*] Ye moun . . tains of Gil . bo . a, let there be no dew,

The musical score is written for a single voice part (soprano or alto) and a basso continuo. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written on a single staff, and the basso continuo is written on a single staff with figured bass notation. The lyrics are: 'Ye moun . . tains of Gil . bo . a, let there be no dew, nei-ther let there be rain up - on you nor fields of of - fer - ings. &c.' The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the first two lines of music, and the second system contains the next two lines. The lyrics are placed below the corresponding musical phrases. The basso continuo part includes figures such as 8, 6, 6, 6, 6, 7, 6, 5, 6, 7, 6, and a final figure 6.

and there are some very beautiful things also in ‘The ways of Zion do mourn’. But Wise’s art is, on the whole, of an informulate character; he never rises to any really steady loftiness of style, and has only elementary notions of structure. He deserves our cordial respect as an earnest and talented musician, but he was by no means a genius.

Much less so, still, were composers like Tudway and Turner, in whose anthems we see how decorously jejune the ecclesiastical music of the time could become in the hands of worthy but utterly commonplace men. Aldrich himself, widely cultured and versatile though he was, produced little that is worth rescuing from the great mass of his solidly dull pages, and Creighton’s ‘I will arise’, though considerably more individual, does not come to very much. But it is notable how soon the specifically instrumental features of the Restoration anthem disappeared; it was only the popularity of solo music that proved lasting. Clarke and Goldwin come just at the end of the period, and in them we see already all the marks of the early eighteenth-century school, though they, like the rather younger and much greater Croft, show occasional traces of the methods of the men of a hundred years before. These are the more noticeable in the case of Goldwin, some of whose best works still remain unprinted: we find in him, it is true, a good deal of the ordinary Restoration rhythmical

and structural methods, but in anthems like the five-part 'Hear me, O God', or the six-part 'O Lord God of hosts', he gets back in the direction of the large contrapuntal designs, and becomes really fine. He has nothing like the genius of Blow (leaving Purcell altogether out of the question), but he seems to have been a close student of the work of both, and not only does he (as in anthems like those just mentioned) occasionally look back, as they sometimes do, to older ways of expression, but sometimes, as in the fine florid declamation at the beginning of 'O Lord my God' or in the ground-basses of the two-part verse-anthem 'O Lord God of hosts',<sup>1</sup> he copies Purcellian phraseology with singular exactitude. Goldwin is, indeed, an attractive sort of composer; he wrote, it is true, plenty of undistinguished music, but at his best he is worthy of more attention than he has usually received.

Clarke was a man of distinctly slighter calibre, though his facile melodiousness has kept several of his works alive. His 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem' is very popular and superficial in tone, consisting of little tiny sections in different rhythms, loosely patched together, and technically very mild indeed; but 'I will love thee, O Lord', and 'How long wilt thou forget me', the two others selected by Boyce for his collection, are considerably better. They show distinct immaturity of structural handling, and aim at nothing higher than a sort of agreeable charm; but they are clean and pleasing in their not very strong way, and show some feeling for expressive setting of words. But Clarke is altogether a somewhat feeble talent; he possesses, with all his pleasant manners (which are quite adequate for some excellent hymn-tunes) very little real artistic backbone, and somehow his music does not seem incongruous with his personal character as shown in his sentimental history.

Perhaps Goldwin and Clarke might be considered to be more fitly coupled with the younger Croft at the head of the next period rather than at the close of this; but still they are in some ways closer to the main current of music during the lifetime of Purcell than to that of the succeeding generation, and it is by reference to the one supreme composer of the period that the places of the lesser men have to be judged.

<sup>1</sup> An entirely different work from the six-part anthem with the same title:



Purcell touched, as no one else did, the music of his age at every point, and has left great works in every department; but it is eminently characteristic of the period that he was not, altogether, most at home in his church music. Not, indeed, that there is in any way the sort of discrepancy that we found between Byrd's sacred and secular work; Purcell produced the greatest religious music of his time, and it is only by comparison with his other work that we occasionally feel in it the pressure of certain conventions and a certain lack of spontaneity. Not even his genius could make a flawless artistic whole out of the typical anthem-form that the French-loving Court had popularized—the short disconnected movements, varied by instrumental sections of totally irrelevant character; and it is comparatively rarely that Purcell's anthems break altogether with this artificial and unsatisfactory scheme. Occasionally, it is true, he produces anthems which are cast in the shape of one continuous movement, after the earlier models; the five-part full anthem 'Remember not, Lord, our offences', for example, is a very fairly successful imitation of the Elizabethan style, and the eight-part 'Hear my prayer, O Lord' is a short but very splendid work in pure *a cappella* counterpoint throughout, modern indeed in tonality,<sup>1</sup> but combining in the highest degree the strong massiveness of the older type with touching expression, and flawlessly unified in design.

No. 65.

[*Slow and expressive*]

Hear my prayer O Lord, and let my cry . . . ing come un - to thee, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, as at the purely Mixolydian end of 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me'—a six-part verse-anthem with strings—Purcell shows strong traces of older key-methods.

In some ways, indeed, short and unvaried though this work is, it may fairly be taken as representing Purcell's anthems at their highest point; the average verse-anthem, always open as it is to the temptation to write round the idiosyncrasies of individual voices, but rarely reaches the same austere grandeur. And even here he is not all fairly represented by some of his best-known works; the so-called 'Bell Anthem'<sup>1</sup> 'Rejoice in the Lord', or 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings' are little more than clean naïve music, vigorous and pure, but without much that is really at all individual, and even anthems like the charmingly delicate 'Thy word is a lantern' or the powerful and impressive 'They that go down to the sea in ships' hardly, taken as a whole, represent Purcell at his best. These last contain fine melody and noble declamation; but we miss in them the strong sweep that we see in other less popular works, like the above-mentioned 'Hear my prayer, O Lord', the superbly brilliant eight-part anthems 'My heart is inditing' (written for the coronation of James II), and 'O praise God in his holiness'—the former especially a very large work free from any trace of the ordinary Restoration lively prettiness—or, in a totally different style, the grandly solemn and sombre 'Man that is born of a woman', with its wonderfully pathetic, half-realistic settings of 'the bitter pains of eternal death', and 'suffer us not to fall away from thee.'

Purcell's anthems are indeed far more unequal than the sacred works of men like Byrd and Gibbons; he was torn two ways at once, as they never were. His frequent long instrumental ritornelli (which many modern editors, with a scandalous lack of historical conscientiousness, which their sense of ecclesiastical fitness cannot outweigh, reduce to minute fractions of the originals) are almost invariably<sup>2</sup> mere perfunctory irrelevancies—entirely unconnected either

<sup>1</sup> The introductory symphony for strings has a ground-bass formed out of a descending scale; the modern organist, by the use of light high stops and other niceties of registration, can produce a very good imitation of bells—of which Purcell, with his bass strings, probably never dreamt for a moment.

<sup>2</sup> The fine movement on a ground-bass which serves as an introduction to 'In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust' is a wellnigh solitary exception; this is impressive music, but in almost all other cases Purcell seems to have taken this part of his work very lightly.



thematically or emotionally with the vocal portions, and, even when (as, for example, in 'My heart is inditing') treated in fugal manner, always retaining a sort of courtly dance-like measure singularly inappropriate to most of the words to which they lead. He was of an accommodating disposition, and does not seem to have had any rooted objection to producing what, after all, is artistically in some sense patchwork; not, indeed, that, save in the very rarest instances, he ever gives the impression of indulging in anything remotely like slovenliness, but he does not seem to concern himself, in many works, about more than the adequately musicianly treatment of details in each separate section as such. Indeed, of all great musicians, he takes, so to speak, the shortest views; but, nevertheless, as a rule, we feel this defect but very slightly in admiration of the loftiness and maturity of the expression and the earnestness of the handling of the materials in the portions where he really takes himself seriously. Apart from those that have been already mentioned, works like 'Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven', 'O Lord God of hosts', 'Why do the heathen',<sup>1</sup> 'Blessed are they that fear the Lord', 'Be merciful unto me, O Lord', 'O sing unto the Lord', 'O God, thou hast cast us out', and others that might easily be named contain very noble music, rich sometimes in pathetic expression, sometimes in powerful solo declamation, sometimes in massive choral dignity; we may, and, indeed, of necessity must, regret the occasional intrusion into some of them of secular rhythms that contrast oddly with the finer portions, but still, with all their imperfections on their heads, Purcell's anthems form a collection of splendid music, even if we feel that his true greatness is hardly, save for a handful of exceptions, represented in them to a really adequate extent.

Purcell seems to have been less attracted towards the Anglican service than most of his contemporaries, and all that he is known to have written for it is a *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* in D, an unusually complete Service in B flat, and an evening

<sup>1</sup> Which forms a most interesting contrast to Handel's settings of the same words and 'Thou shalt break them' (words which also occur in this anthem); it would be very hard to deny that Purcell is here far the more dignified and distinctive of the two composers.

service (after the ordinary plan) in G minor; but he is at a high level in them all. The real greatness of the first-named was very largely obscured till recent times owing to the fact that it was almost exclusively known merely through the strange edition of Boyce, who, in addition to unwarranted harmonic alterations, inserted many pages of what is purely his own work. The *Jubilate* is structurally the more shapely of the two pieces, the *Te Deum* showing a good deal of the rather incoherent scrappiness of design that we so often find in some of the Restoration composers' best music; but both alike contain much that is of a singularly massive brilliance, of a kind that their composer never excelled. The section 'Day by day we magnify thee' in the *Te Deum* displays Purcell's contrapuntally ecclesiastical style at its best; the form is well wrought, the expression finely dignified, and all the incongruous secularities of the age are totally absent. The same can also be said of the section 'Vouchsafe, O Lord', with its deep restrained feeling; and many other pages in both *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* show that Purcell, in spite of not infrequent lapses into structural fragmentariness and rather mechanical rhythmical formulas, recognized that the work was one that demanded some of his best efforts. And, indeed, in the great Service in B flat<sup>1</sup> we can see similar evidence that the old liturgical words made a strong appeal to him, seldom as (probably owing to the far greater scope for 'modern effects' available in anthems) he brought himself to set them; it was, perhaps, with a desire to associate his name with a uniquely monumental work in this field that he added to what was already a complete service (morning, evening, and communion) another, consisting of settings of the alternative canticles. Here again, though there are still occasional structural weaknesses unknown to men like Byrd and Gibbons, there are none of the court conventionalities of the 'popular' anthems; the music is both religious and human, and the fresh dignity of the whole exercises powerful fascination. Passing touches, in the cadences, of older tonal systems add a sort of flavour of delicate austerity; and yet the whole is essentially

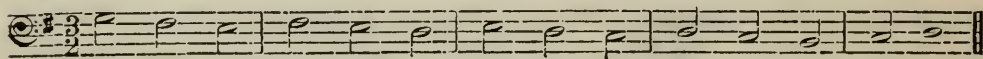
<sup>1</sup> The evening service in G minor is decidedly inferior, though it contains fine things, notably a long and really splendid Gloria to the *Nunc Dimittis*.



modern in sentiment, and there is none of that false antiquarianism into which many continental seventeenth-century composers so easily and so fatally lapsed. Purcell was always himself, however much he absorbed from his surroundings.

But to see Purcell's sacred music in what is perhaps its most striking aspect, we should turn from the anthems and services, magnificent as they often are, to the works written to religious words, but intended apparently for private, not public use. They are very numerous and of all kinds; we have dramatic scenes, 'hymns', sometimes for solo voices and sometimes for trio or quartet, and various untitled pieces, chiefly declamatory in character. Some of them may, perhaps, have been sung chorally, but they would seem to have been, at any rate originally, designed for single vocal parts throughout, and the writing is always unlike that shown in the full anthems. It is, indeed, as a rule more declamatory and, so to speak, rhapsodical than that shown in the solo portions of the average verse-anthem, essentially flexible and unfettered by definite thematic material as the latter usually is; and in the few cases (such as 'We sing to him whose wisdom'), where Purcell altogether abandons the style, the music is comparatively quite uninteresting. Throughout all there are practically no connecting thematic links, save such as are afforded by the ground-basses on which some of these pieces are built; we shall have further opportunities of seeing how markedly partial Purcell was to this particular structure, and these sacred vocal works show examples as fine as any of the better-known secular movements in the form. As a rule, the ground-bass movements are for a solo voice, among which the very impressive 'O solitude' and especially the exquisitely fresh and melodious 'Now that the sun' (an 'Evening Hymn')—built up with astonishing ingenuity on a very straightforward figure—

No. 66.



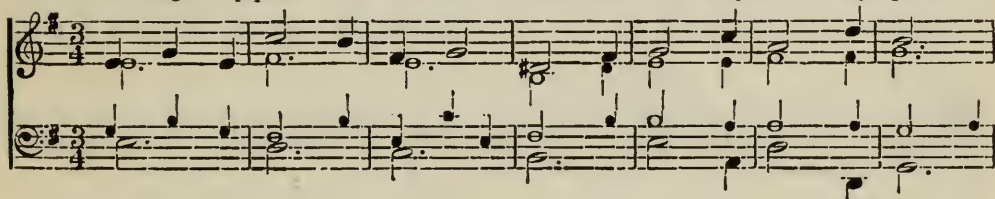
are pre-eminent; but sometimes they are for voices in combination. The end of the four-part 'Beati omnes qui timent Dominum'—a very florid Hallelujah (semiquaver scales, &c.) on an instrumental ground-bass—is an interesting variant of

the composer's ordinary methods, and the Hymn for two tenors and bass, 'Since God so tender a regard' is, though containing three movements, built throughout in simple but finely impressive style on the foundation of a ground-bass in *alla breve* time, the middle movement being in  $\frac{3}{2}$  time, but keeping the same notes though differently accented. Apart from cases like these, there is as little definite tunefulness in these hymns and scenes as in the anthems and services—Purcell seems to have considered regular flowing melody inappropriate to religious music as a rule; but there is one notable exception in the five-voice hymn 'Early, O Lord, my fainting soul', which is not remarkable save for a treble solo passage containing a splendidly swinging tune that might have come straight out of one of the operas save for its essential seriousness of tone—

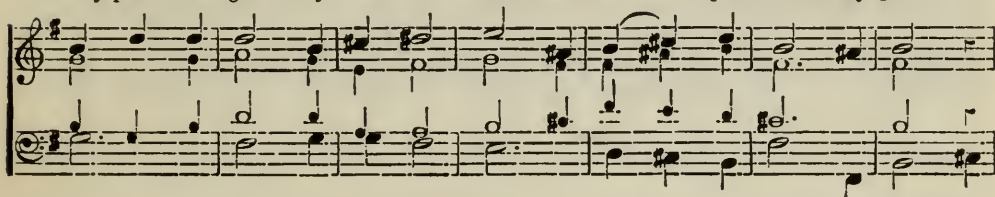
No. 67.

[Moderately slow]—

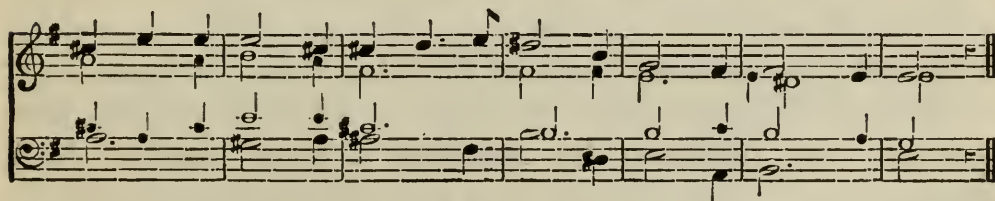
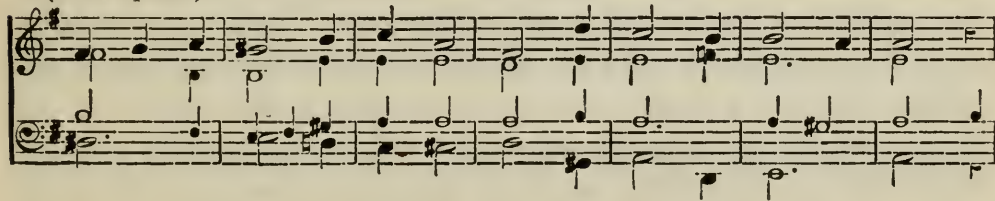
I long to ap-pear as I was wont with-in thy ho-ly place.



Thy power and glo-ry to be-hold and to par-take thy grace.



(words repeated)



Even here, however, the composer at once obscures the rhythm by imitations between the different voices; and undoubtedly



the free declamatory style is the most typical. Works like the bass solo 'Awake, and with attention hear'—a sort of gorgeous rhapsody in a good many movements—the splendidly massive 'Hymn upon the last day' for two basses, the fine sombre 'Morning Hymn' for soprano,<sup>1</sup> the powerful four-voice 'O all ye people, clap your hands', or the deeply pathetic and expressive three- and four-voice 'O I'm sick of life' and 'Ah few and full of sorrows'—

No. 68.

[*Slow and solemn*]

Ah few . . . . . and full of

sor . . . rows are the days of man from wo - man sprung.

&c.

represent Purcell's genius in a form to which there is hardly any parallel in the whole range of the art. There is no ostensible reason anywhere why the music should continue in one way rather than in another: and yet, somehow, the effect of the whole apparently inconsequential work is thoroughly organic. The risks are enormous, and no doubt in a very considerable number of cases we feel that they have not been successfully met; but Purcell's best works of this kind, whether to sacred or secular words, show very conclusively to what heights pure rhapsody can attain in the hands of a great master. It is strange that a work like 'Ah few and full of sorrows', with its extraordinary subtlety both of expression and of harmony, is

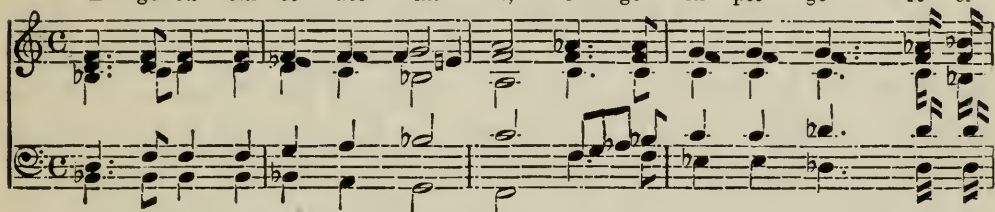
<sup>1</sup> Usually now sung in a transposed key by a low voice.

comparatively so little known; the dramatic scene 'Saul and the Witch of Endor' ('In guilty night') is the most famous of these sacred fantasias, but in spite of its simple dignity and its extremely impressive 'very slow' close, it is, as a whole, much stiffer than the others already mentioned, and its superior reputation is only accidental.

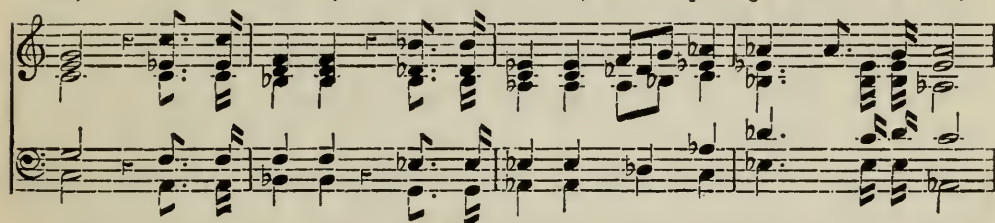
One work indeed there is, and that one of Purcell's very greatest masterpieces, that stands, so to speak, midway between the anthems and the varied productions we have just been considering; this is the psalm 'Iehova, quam multi sunt', for tenor and bass solos and five-part chorus. In this lengthy and most nobly imagined work—the section 'Ego cubui et dormivi' is one of the most solemnly beautiful inspirations in all English music—

No. 69. [*Very slow and expressive*]

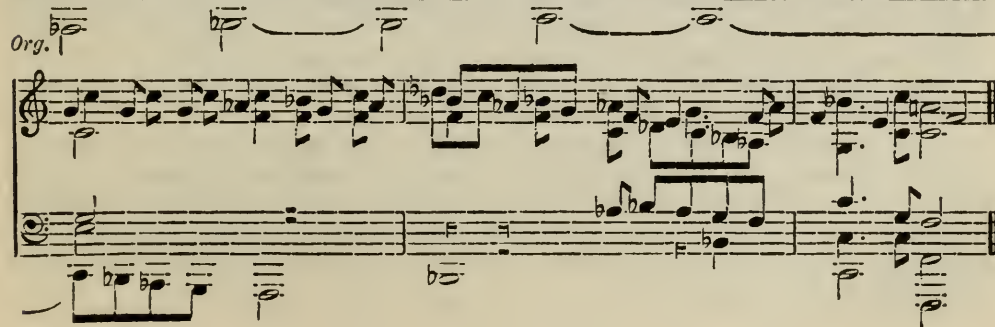
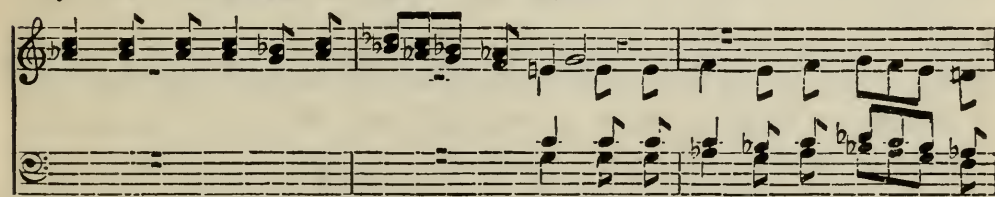
E - go cu - bui et dor - mi - vi, e - go ex - per - ge - fe - ci



me, et dor - mi - vi, et dor - mi - vi, ex - per - ge - fe - ci me,



Qui - a Ie - ho - vah sus - ten - tat me, &c.

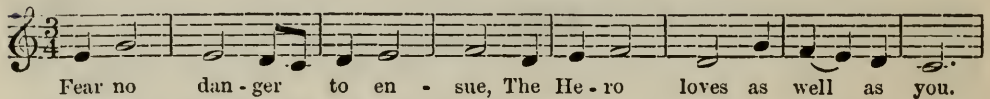




we see nothing of the conventionalities of many of the anthems, nothing of the ramblings of many of the hymns; the whole thing is firmly organized from start to finish, and there is not the least declension of ideal anywhere. If we were regrettably forced to pin our faith in Purcell as a religious composer on one work alone, it is to this psalm perhaps that most of those who are familiar with it would turn.

But to see Purcell in his most consistently individual mood we must turn from his religious compositions to those written for the stage. *Dido and Aeneas* is the only dramatic production of his that can really be called an opera, all his others being merely more or less extensive incidental music to plays; but it is in work like this, to which no other great composer ever lent his hand except now and then,<sup>1</sup> that the flame of his genius burned brightest. *Dido and Aeneas* has been generally dated in 1680, but there is evidence tending to place it eight or nine years later;<sup>2</sup> anyhow, there is not a trace of immaturity in it (as there is, for example, visible in parts of the *Timon of Athens* masque of 1678,<sup>3</sup> or in the *Macbeth* music formerly attributed to Lock) and though the libretto is dramatically scrappy and often, indeed, ridiculous, the music is full of varied characterization, from the great dying song of Dido (which has always, and very justly, been one of Purcell's most famous things), or the very tender and graceful last chorus 'With drooping wings ye Cupids come', to the swinging sailor tunes or the picturesque witches' scenes. The composer's favourite triple syncopated rhythm is noticeable at once in a tune like this—

No. 70.

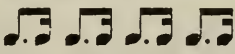


<sup>1</sup> Though Beethoven's music to *Egmont*, and Schumann's to *Manfred*, show, it is true, what they could do with congenial situations; but a great deal of Purcell's activity in this line was the kind of thing that to them would have seemed hackwork below a serious composer's dignity.

<sup>2</sup> See Barclay Squire's article on 'Purcell's Dramatic Music' (*Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, vol. v).

<sup>3</sup> The original overture of this ends with a very rambling and, in tonality and everything else, quite incoherent section consisting of fifteen repeated bits of music; Purcell utilized the rest of the overture (with one or two very slight harmonic changes) for the Duke of Gloucester's Birthday Ode seventeen years later, but entirely omitted this portion. He also drew from it for one of his sonatas.

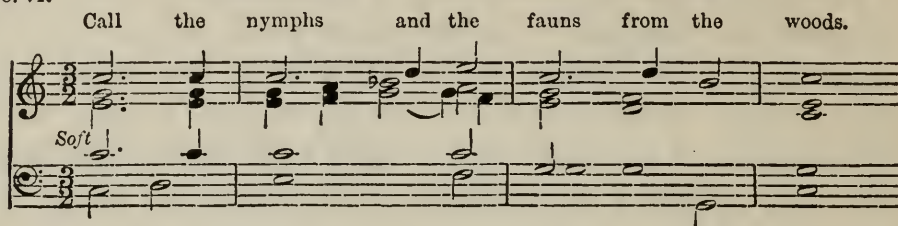
and, indeed, all through the opera Purcell is already the individual genius; but, mature though it certainly is, it does not yet show (apart from Dido's unsurpassable 'When I am laid in earth') any of his very greatest qualities—it stands to his later work as, let us say, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* stands to *The Tempest*. On the other hand, in the incidental music to *The Prophetess, or the History of Dioclesian* (1690), *King Arthur* (1691), and *The Fairy Queen* (1692), we see the composer at his best almost from their first pages to their last; and splendid as is much of the work for other plays, it is these that most of all deserve our close attention.

*Dioclesian* (as the first of these is now usually known) is most familiar by the recently reprinted Masque, which forms practically the whole of the music to the fifth act; but the earlier portions contain much that is equally fine. The overture is not, indeed, much of an exception to the rule that these movements are less interesting than other portions; but the second of its three sections, though as usual partially fugal in style, is remarkable as being built throughout on a continued  rhythm, without the least disguise or cessation from start to finish. But the short 'act-tunes' and other dance-measures scattered about the play are far finer, and include some of Purcell's most charming work in this line, in which he was so especially at home; the Chaconne at the beginning of the third act, written for two flutes in canon over a ground-bass, is specially ingenious, and the 'Butterfly dance' in the following act shows him at his daintiest. It is true that the 'soft music' during the arrival of the 'dreadful monster', and the thunder and lightning dance of the Furies, are very mild; Purcell had very little or no capacity for the dramatically bloodcurdling. But we readily pass over these comparative failures, and turn rather to such things as 'Let the soldiers rejoice', or 'With dances and songs', or 'What shall I do to show how much I love her', all typically lyrical tunes, with finely organized phrases; and in the contralto solo with trumpet obbligato 'Sound, Fame, thy brazen trumpet sound', we find a different style, consisting of massive florid writing (above a surging *moto perpetuo* bass) that leads in splendidly dignified manner



to the large chorus 'Let all rehearse in lofty verse', which strikes a more powerful and, so to speak, epic note than the rest. But the Masque is on the whole the most individual portion of *Dioclesian*; from Cupid's first wonderful phrase—

No. 71.



to the stirring trio 'Triumph victorious' and the brilliant little chorus that follows, it is crowded with lovely dewy music, some of the most polished and fascinating that even Purcell ever wrote, and full of an open-air freshness that hardly any one else in the history of the art has succeeded in attaining so perfectly. And there is no lack of contrast; the rollicking Bacchanals and the amorous shepherds are equally brilliantly portrayed, and swinging as the rhythms always are, their varieties are endless.

The incidental music to *King Arthur* is generally recognized as Purcell's masterpiece, and on the whole it deserves its reputation; though it would be easy to find equally fine numbers in many other works, yet perhaps none is so steadily large in style all through. The overture in the minor key, in two movements and for strings alone,<sup>1</sup> is, as in *Dioclesian* and elsewhere, much less interesting than the rest of the work; but on the other hand Purcell never wrote anything more finely organized than the spacious Passacaglia in the fourth act, the structure of which is very remarkable. Like all Passacaglias, it is on a ground-bass throughout, but it differs from nearly all others in being a combination of numerous vocal and instrumental pieces. First there is a long instrumental introduction, which is followed by a beautiful song (of which there is no trace in the introduction), 'How

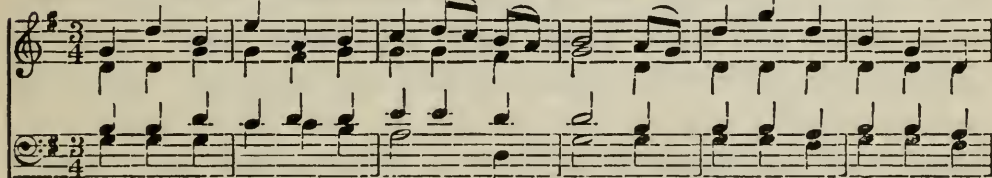
<sup>1</sup> Another overture, also in two movements, but in D major and with the addition of trumpets to the score, is attached to the work in some copies, and was printed in an appendix by the Musical Antiquarian Society when the opera was first published. It also occurs as an overture to one of the Birthday Odes for Queen Mary.

happy the lover', set for soprano solo and repeated by chorus, still on the same bass; then we have another long instrumental ritornello, with the ground-bass somewhat varied—sometimes more florid in various ways, sometimes inverted. Then there is a duet for soprano and bass soloists with the ground persisting still, but now in simpler form and with occasional transposition to the relative major key; a new chorus on the ground in its original form and key follows, and is succeeded by a trio for 'three nymphs' (with the ground inverted, and slightly altered after two repetitions) and that by a trio for 'three sylvans' (with a simplified form of the ground, not inverted). Then the nymphs sing again over the ground in its original form, and a chorus (with the ground first varied and finally as at the start) ends this astonishing piece; technically there is nothing finer in all the music of the period, but perhaps, apart from 'How happy the lover', the actual thematic interest is not at the level of the less definitely ingenious parts of the work. But in all the acts we have pages that make irresistible appeals to all music-lovers alike: the powerful sacrificial scene, the charming wayward fairy music of Philidel and Grimbald, the scene of Cupid and the Frost Genius, with its picturesquely realistic shivering vocal effects, are all, in their very different ways, unsurpassable examples of Purcell's grasp of situations as wholes. And then there are the immortal tunes: 'How blest are shepherds'<sup>1</sup>—

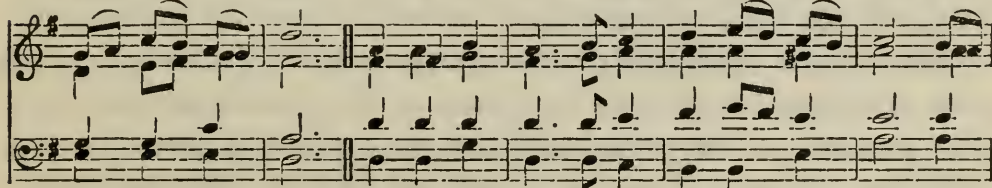
No. 72.

*Cheerfully*

How blest are shepherds, how hap - py their las - ses, While drums and trumpets are



sound - ing a - larms: O - ver our low - ly sheds all the storm pas - ses,



<sup>1</sup> The tune is in two parts, each being given out by the tenor solo and repeated by chorus (as in the quotation). Notice, by the by, the delicious way in which the 'drums and trumpets' are expressed.



And when we die 'tis in each o - ther's arms; All the day on our herds  
 and flocks em - ploy - ing, All the night on our flutes and in en - joy - ing.

and 'Fairest isle, all isles excelling', and other less known melodies, like 'Love has a thousand ways to please', with its entrancing first phrase, or 'Saint George, the patron of our isle', with its spacious swinging bass, or a delicate piece of quasi-declamation like the duet 'Two daughters of this aged stream are we'. We have indeed no specimens of that peculiar, almost gossamer-like daintiness that we find pre-eminently in *Dioclesian* and *The Fairy Queen*; but on the other hand we have qualities of perhaps a somewhat stronger kind which those works do not exhibit, at any rate to the same extent.

Yet it is conceivable that many Purcell-lovers, if they were by some painful necessity reduced to parting with all his works save one, would cling longest to *The Fairy Queen*, which has within the last few years burst on the musical horizon as a virtual novelty; only a few selections from the very large work had been previously published (and that only during Purcell's own lifetime) and the complete score had indeed been given up as lost till it was discovered in the library of the Royal Academy of Music. All this mass of incidental music shows, it is true, comparatively little variety of mood, for which the dramatic situations give no opportunity; there is little evidence of the serious side of Purcell's genius and comparatively little evidence of his technical brilliancy. Yet perhaps no long work of his is so absolutely crowded with melody; tunes as purely lyrical as any in existence meet us on wellnigh every page. The little instrumental pieces, the 'Dance of the Followers of Night' (a delightful double

canon), the dances of 'The Green Men', 'The Haymakers', and so on—songs like 'Sing while we trip it', 'See, even Night herself is here', 'If Love's a sweet passion', 'Now the night is chas'd away', 'Here's the Summer, sprightly gay'—all these, if indeed they strike no emotionally deep vein, are unsurpassable for sheer grace; and occasionally Purcell diverges into somewhat different channels, as in the extraordinarily clean and strong duet for two altos 'Let the fifes and the clarions', the vigorous florid soprano solo 'Hark! the ech'ing air', which has all the Handelian vocal brilliance without any of his not infrequent conventionality, Winter's remarkable song, 'Next Winter comes slowly,' largely based on the chromatic scale, or impressive ground-bass movements like 'O let me weep' (rather of the type of Dido's great song in *Dido and Aeneas*), and the alto song for 'A Chinese Man,' 'Thus, thus, the gloomy world.' The scene of the 'Drunken Poet and the Fairies' has throughout unusual characterization; it is full of real humour and fresh charm, and the fairy music is exquisite. Indeed, no one, save Mendelssohn, has equalled Purcell in that particular sort of lightness of style that such work demands, if it is to be really successful; and this music of the older composer's may worthily stand by the side of the best portions of the masterpiece, inspired by the same play of Shakespeare, that was written some century and a half later.

But, indeed, the wealth of music that Purcell scattered up and down these Restoration plays is wellnigh endless; literary considerations never seem to have affected him in the least (probably the atrocious manglings of Shakespeare left him totally unmoved), and he set anything to which he was asked to put his hand. It is really only a series of accidents that have preserved to our concert audiences gems like the Ariel songs from *The Tempest*, or 'Nymphs and shepherds' and 'In these delightful pleasant groves' (both from *The Libertine*), or 'I attempt from Love's sickness to fly' (from *The Indian Queen*), more than others which are really quite as entrancing, or powerful declamatory scenas like 'Let the dreadful engines' (from *Don Quixote*<sup>1</sup>), or 'Ye twice ten hundred deities' (from

<sup>1</sup> In the original there is no final return to the section 'Can nothing



*The Indian Queen*), more than others of equal dramatic splendour; while just occasionally, as in the case of 'Britons, strike home' (from *Bonduca*), music which is a little more obvious than Purcell usually is has acquired, probably owing to patriotic words, a fame that, in comparison with other work, it hardly deserves.<sup>1</sup> And the researcher among the original sources for this mass of music will find unexpected treasures everywhere; the Masque in *Oedipus* is a quite superb work from start to finish, and the extended music to *The Indian Queen*, again, shows exceptional power, especially in the trio 'What flattering noise is this, at which my snakes all hiss,' where two of the three voices sing only the last word, with remarkable effect. Things there are no doubt which are more or less perfunctory and uncharacteristic, the sort of work that any capable contemporary composer could have turned out; but, on the whole, especially considering Purcell's extraordinary fertility, the average level is very high—higher, indeed, than that of the majority of the great composers. All these dusty plays, with their scanty blossoms of poetry among acres of bombast, owe wellnigh all of whatever vitality they possess to the fact that Purcell wrote music for them; but while the dramas themselves have long slept in perfect security on library shelves, the music has straggled down to our time as best it could, printed, when printed at all, with, as a rule, extreme carelessness, and (even up to the present) never, save in a few instances, edited with any insight or knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The 'Airs for the Theatre' have undoubtedly fared best, though the fact that the bulk of them have not as yet been issued in score has prevented their merits being

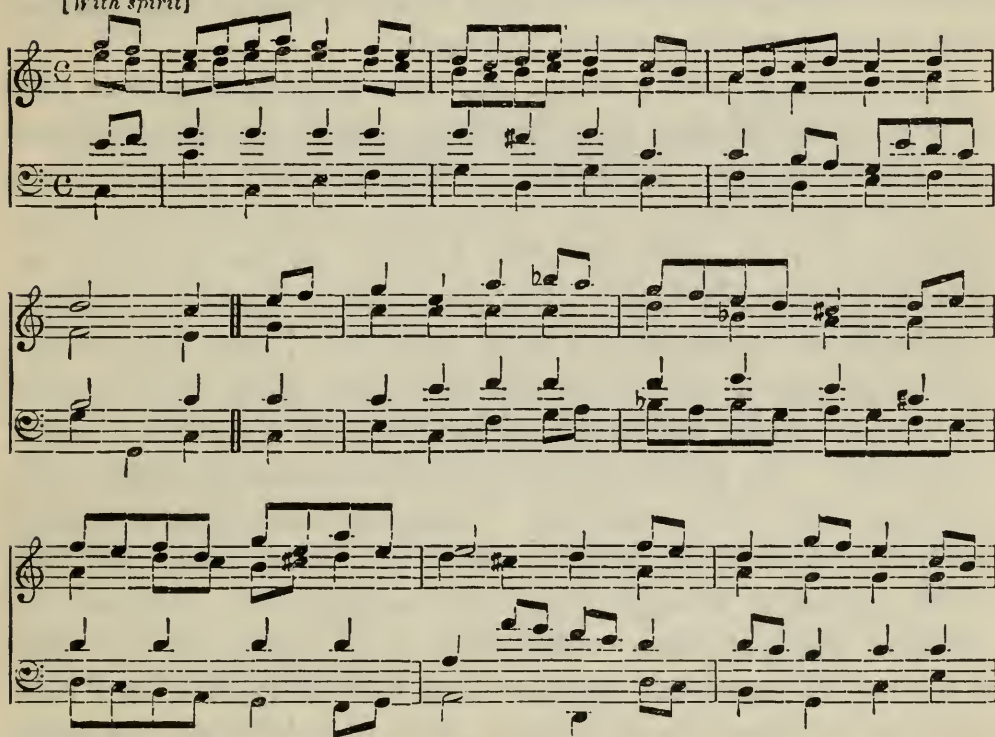
warm me' (as the scena is now always reprinted and sung), but it ends with a quite new movement, very strong and direct, and, with its sort of rough humour, making a far better ending than what has been substituted, besides being far more akin to Purcell's ordinary structures in pieces of this kind. But the words of this last section are rather unsingable to the audiences of our politer age—though this is not very much of an excuse for inartistic mangling.

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the so-called 'Golden Sonata' has, purely by reason of its name, supplanted—for concert-goers—the whole of Purcell's other chamber-music.

<sup>2</sup> Occasionally, however, the tables were turned on the authors of the words. I have seen a contemporary MS. of Purcell's overture to Dryden's *Amphitryon* where the copyist—obviously the possessor of the proverbially dangerous little learning—has emended the title to the delightful one of *The Amphitryton*.

at all widely known ; they form, indeed, the best and most complete evidence we have of Purcell's system of harmony and part-writing in general, as such a large mass of his other work is set down merely with figured basses.<sup>1</sup> The overtures themselves are nearly always rather ordinary in style ; but the strict 'airs' that comprise the great bulk of the volumes, and include transcriptions of vocal numbers,<sup>2</sup> along with originally purely instrumental pieces, are of inexhaustible interest. Perhaps a 'Boree' (i.e. Bourrée), from the music to *The Old Bachelor*, may be quoted as typical of the ordinary style of the more lively specimens—

No. 73.  
[With spirit]



<sup>1</sup> They include music from *Dioclesian*, *King Arthur*, *The Fairy Queen*, *The Indian Queen*, *The Married Beau*, *The Old Bachelor*, *Amphitryon*, *The Double Dealer*, *Distressed Innocency or The Princess of Persia*, *The Gordian Knot Untied*, *Abelazor*, *Bonduca*, and *The Virtuous Wife*. But all this still does not by any means comprise the whole of Purcell's work of the kind.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes under rather unintelligible titles ; for example, the chorus from *The Indian Queen* 'We come to sing great Zempoalla's praise', which in the original is accompanied merely by strings, here appears as a 'trumpet tune'—though there is no trumpet here or in any other of the 'Airs', which are all for strings alone.





The spontaneous charm of these little pieces, harmonically polished in every detail, according to Purcell's own very individual methods, is really astonishing; and it says much for Restoration playgoers that they could appreciate work of this kind, even though it claimed merely to be a more or less unimportant adjunct to the drama, while the fact of its reprint in separate form would seem to show that it was familiar quite apart from the original contexts.

Apart from Purcell's works, the most notable dramatic production by a composer of this period is Blow's elaborate *Venus and Adonis* masque. Though Blow was decidedly most at home in sacred music, this is a very interesting work, and interesting not only in its merits but in its defects; on the one hand, we have charming and really distinctive music, like the 'Gavatt' of Graces, or especially the final scene for Venus and chorus, 'With solemn pomp let mourning Cupids bear' (which is in Blow's best style), and on the other we have a certain amount of crudity. The harmony is not always convincing; apart from peculiarities of 'false-relations',<sup>1</sup> there are occasional moments when the scheme of tonality seems to fall to pieces, and the tunes, pleasant though they are usually, are inclined to meander along anyhow, without showing any particular trace of the sort of organized balance that Purcell exhibits as a rule, even in his freest declamation. But, nevertheless, the work is, as a whole, well worth attention; stiff and uncertain as parts of it are, there is yet much that is really fresh and individual; we may notice some curious quaintnesses, as this passage from the 'Cupid's lesson' scene, which closely recalls similar spellings of words letter by letter and syllable by syllable in the motets of many of the great ecclesiastical continental composers of the sixteenth century—

<sup>1</sup> See chapter xiii.

No. 74.

[Quick]

The M E R Mer C E Ce Mer - ce N A na

R Y ry the mer - ce - na - ry

or the laugh of Venus in Act iii, which is a typically modern vocal effect—

No. 75.

ah, . . ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, . .

The stage music of John Eccles also deserves a few words ; overshadowed as he was by Purcell, with whom he sometimes collaborated, he yet possessed a fresh and not undistinguished talent, though somewhat unpolished and narrow in scope. His work for *Don Quixote*, published together with Purcell's, has many points in it ; his song for Sancho Panza, ' 'Twas early one morning,'<sup>1</sup> has a sort of jovial dashing vigour that is quite attractive, though the difference in maturity of touch between it and Purcell's adjacent and emotionally very similar 'Song sung by a Galley-slave' is enormous. And, similarly, Eccles' 'Dirge' on a ground-bass—

No. 76.

[Slow]

Couch'd . . in the dark and si - lent grave,

&c.

6b 6 6 b 6 5b b 6b 6

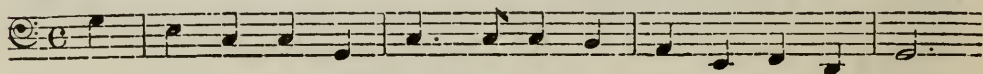
<sup>1</sup> There is not even a bass in the original score ; presumably it was sung unaccompanied.



contrasts rather badly with Purcell's work of the kind ; there is plenty of expressiveness, and the bass is excellent, but he cannot quite handle his material. Nevertheless, Eccles could write very pleasantly in his way—the song 'A soldier and a sailor' which Hawkins printed from the incidental music to Congreve's *Love for Love*, for example, has a first-rate swing about it ; and, though he cannot compare with his great contemporaries, his popularity was by no means undeserved.

Purcell's 'Odes' form an important section of his compositions, and they contain some of his very finest work, however much we cannot avoid regretting that a great genius should have lent himself to the enhancing of these reams of loathsome flattery of whatever sovereign happened to be on the throne, and other royalties, down to the Duke of Gloucester, aged six, to whom an ode of specially sickening adulation is inscribed. Of the three Birthday Odes for Queen Mary, the third, 'Welcome glorious morn,' dating from 1691, is considerably the greatest ; it contains some very beautiful tunes, such as 'To lofty strains her tuneful lyre she strung' (written for a high bass, with numerous top G's) and 'I see the round years successively move', and is throughout strong music, more individual and more lyrical in its flow than the 1689 and 1690 odes, clean and vigorous though they are. The numerous 'Welcome Songs', for three successive kings, also show plenty of fine work—'Swifter, Isis, swifter flow,' contains one of Purcell's most flexible and vitalized ground-bass movements on this foundation—

No. 77.



though, perhaps, next to the 1691 Ode to Queen Mary, the best of these ceremonial court pieces is the Duke of Gloucester's Birthday Ode, written in 1695, and so one of its composer's very latest productions ; the alto solo 'A Prince of glorious race descended,' founded on a ground-bass, and succeeded by a long instrumental section on the same subject, is notably fine stately music, and the whole ode (though it contains no tunes of special outstanding merit) shows Purcell in a brilliant vein.

But none of these royal *pièces d'occasion* are equal in merit to the justly better-known 'Yorkshire Feast Song', and the best of the series written for the festivities of St. Cecilia's Day. D'Urfey, the author of the words of the Yorkshire Ode, has recorded his opinion that it is 'one of the finest compositions Mr. Henry Purcell ever made', and few would be inclined to question this; hardly any work of Purcell's is more breezily joyous from start to finish, and tunes like the strenuous, swinging alto solo 'Sound, trumpets, sound,' or the lovely tenor air on a ground-bass 'So when the glitt'ring Queen of night,' may rank with his very best. For the St. Cecilia's Day celebrations, Purcell wrote altogether five works—the already-mentioned *Te Deum and Jubilate* in D (1694), a Latin Hymn 'Laudate Ceciliam' (1683)—probably for the Queen's private Roman Catholic Chapel—and three odes, 'Welcome to all the pleasures,' 'Raise the voice,' and 'Hail, great Cecilia;' of these three, the first was written for the inaugural festival in 1683, the second is undated,<sup>1</sup> and the third was produced in 1692. The Latin Hymn is a work of an unusual type, that seems to be based on specific Italian models,<sup>2</sup> and it is partly written in notes of the old shapes, probably to give a sort of ecclesiastical look to the page. The form is curious, and is as follows:—

1. Symphony.

a. A sort of Maestoso; common time, in the usual dotted rhythm.

b. A  $\frac{3}{2}$  movement, no doubt faster.

2. (?) Chorus (three parts) in the same rhythm as No. 1 b, and really a continuation of it.

3. A sort of Largo; florid writing for three solo voices.

4. A Bass solo, leading to a repetition of No. 2.

5. Repetition of No. 1 in its entirety.

6. A movement for three solo voices, less florid and with more ensemble work than No. 3.

7. Repetition of No. 2 in its entirety.

<sup>1</sup> Two MSS. of subsequent date mention 1683 as the year of production; but this seems highly unlikely in view of the indubitable fact that 'Welcome to all the pleasures' was written for that occasion.

<sup>2</sup> The preface to the three-part sonatas, published in the same year, shows Purcell's interest in Italian music; and he is known to have copied a motet of Carissimi for his own instruction.



This is a very interesting attempt at elaborate structural unity, and is hardly paralleled elsewhere in the English music of the period, whether by Purcell himself or by any other composer; and apart from this fact, the work contains, with all its markedly Italian influences, a great deal of really individual and highly attractive material. It is, indeed, considerably finer, on the whole, than the two earlier of the English odes, bright and effective though they are; in 'Welcome to all the pleasures' we may specially notice the charming short final chorus, and in 'Raise the voice' the section 'Hark, how readily each pliant string'—first a soprano solo, then a three-part chorus, and then a 'symphony', the whole being built up, with great ingenuity, on an elaborate ground-bass. But the great 1692 ode is of altogether different quality; it was apparently recognized at the time as one of its composer's masterpieces, and it has always remained one of his most famous works, even if we feel that some of his others show him in more subtle mood than was possible in a composition of a decorative and ceremonial character. It is far larger in style and scope than the others; its fine florid recitatives are equal to any Purcell ever wrote, and the whole work is marked by a sort of spacious brilliance of an exceptional kind. The details are frequently elaborate and always highly effective, and every part is finely organized in a straightforward way, not, indeed, that the words receive, or really admit of, any special subtlety of treatment, but there is no smallness of style anywhere, and the whole bears the unmistakable impress of distinction. The score displays some interesting orchestral features; the instrumental prelude is unusually extended and complex, consisting of no fewer than six movements; (1) a sort of pompous fanfare, (2) a 'Canzone'—here a double fugato, (3) a section entitled 'Slow' in the dominant minor key—a sort of sarabande, (4) a busy allegro movement, (5) a short 'Grave' in the tonic minor, (6) No. 4 da capo. Altogether, Purcell seems in this ode to have set himself consciously to plan on large lines; there are very few of his works which show so much deliberate desire to impress, even if we, for whom there is no longer the attraction of technical novelty, may feel that, in spite of all its beauties, it must yield in individuality of appeal to other works of

which possibly Purcell's contemporaries thought less enthusiastically.

All through this period we cannot feel altogether certain whether solo songs were written as independent pieces or as interpolations into some sort of dramatic production; but, on the whole, it would seem that the proportion of strictly independent songs is smaller with Purcell than with most other composers of the time. Blow's *Amphion Anglicus*, for example, seems to be chiefly made up of strictly 'chamber-music' songs; and it is arranged on a definite plan, at least in so far as it opens with a rambling 'Prologue'<sup>1</sup> and ends with an 'Epilogue,' 'Sing ye muses,' for four voices and two violins. No doubt the volume cannot compare with Purcell's *Orpheus Britannicus* in general interest; Blow's touch is much less sure and his inspiration less steady. But still the average music-lover of to-day, who knows the volume merely by the beautiful minuet song to Waller's words, 'The self-banished,' does Blow a great injustice<sup>2</sup>; stilted though a good many pages are, there are many others that show really individual melody and fine solid workmanship. Among the best may be mentioned 'Shepherds, deck your crooks'—a beautifully dewy and fresh piece for solo and chorus, very well designed, and throughout strikingly light in touch, with a delightful *moto perpetuo* bass—or 'Rise, mighty monarch,' a fine massive declamatory bass song—or the breezy, pastoral two-part song 'Bring, shepherds, bring the kids and lambs'—or the vigorous

<sup>1</sup> The words are quaint:—

Welcome, welcome, ev'ry Guest:  
Welcome to the Muses' Feast:  
Musick is your only cheer,  
Musick entertains the Ear:  
The sacred Nine observe the Mode,  
And bring you dainties from abroad:  
The delicious *Thracian* Lute,  
And *Dodona's* mellow Flute,  
With *Cremona's* racy Fruit,  
At home you have the freshest Air;  
Vocal, Instrumental Fare.

Our English Trumpet nothing has surpast.

Unfortunately, there is no trumpet at all in the score, which contains only parts for flutes and violins, with a 'Thorow-Bass figured for an Organ, Harpsichord, or Theorboe-Lute.'

<sup>2</sup> An excellent selection of six has been recently reprinted in Arkwright's 'Old English Edition'; it contains four of those mentioned here.



setting of the familiar satirical poem, 'Of all the torments'—or the buoyant 'Song upon the Duke of Gloucester,' the young naval prince, built on a good nautical sort of ground-bass—or the bass song, 'Arms, arms, arms, he delights in,' with a really splendid opening, which has all Purcell's power of declamation, and yet is individual—or 'The fair lover to his black mistress', from which we may quote a few bars in illustration of its finely flowing and organized tune, full of vigorous life and spirit—

No. 78.

Not too slow. (*Allegro moderato e con brio*)

Oh, Ni - gro-cel - la Oh, Ni - gro-cel - -

la, don't des -

- pise a lo - ver's trem - - - -

bling, trem - bling flame

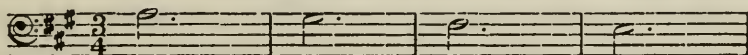
&c.

It is true that Blow cannot somehow, save in a handful of exceptional cases (such as the last of these), sustain himself at his best level throughout a song; phrases which a superior genius would have turned to first-rate account are left in, so to speak, a straggling condition, and many of the tunes seem somehow

just a little less good than they might have been. Yet Blow, though his real greatness was shown in other fields,<sup>1</sup> had plenty of ideas, and sometimes, indeed, is curiously advanced in technique; the song 'Musick's the Cordial of a troubled Breast', entitled 'A solo for two violins,' has a real look of Bach, with its interweaving part-writing, and its solo bass voice sometimes doubling the instrumental bass, sometimes curling round it, and sometimes quite independent, making pure four-part harmony quite after Bach's model.

The collections of the time, such as *The Banquet of Music*, *Deliciae Musicae*, and all the rest, are full of solo songs, but they are nearly all little if anything more than weak reflections of those of Purcell and Blow, and require hardly any notice. Occasionally, as in Humfrey's 'I pass all my hours in a shady old grove,' or, at the other end of the period, several songs of Clarke, we strike a vein of melody which, if not very strong, is, nevertheless, individual; and here and there, even among the works of quite inferior men, we come across something good, as, for example (in the sixth book of *The Banquet of Music*) the really notably beautiful, as well as very clever, 'Be gentle, Phillis,' by Barrincloe, finely organized on an exceedingly simple ground-bass—

No. 79.



But to wade through these volumes is, on the whole, a monotonous task; Purcell did everything so much better than any one else.

The number of Purcell's secular songs which never, so far as we can definitely judge, were intended for insertion in a play or other extended production, is not, comparatively speaking, very large<sup>2</sup>; apart from the splendid dramatic lyric, 'Bess of

<sup>1</sup> The long dedicatory preface to Princess Anne of Denmark refers to his 'Church Services and Divine Compositions' as 'those, in truth, to which I have ever more especially consecrated the thoughts of my whole life.'

<sup>2</sup> *Orpheus Britannicus* is in this respect by no means a trustworthy guide; pieces are described as 'single songs' which we know, from independent evidence, were written for plays, and the inscriptions of the several numbers are very vague, and occasionally (as in the title 'a two-part song' to the purely solo 'Let the dreadful engines') obtrusively careless. Nor are collections like Playford's *Banquet of Music* and the rest any better.



Bedlam,' hardly any are familiar even by name save to professed Purcellian students. Nor indeed do they contain any special emotional qualities unseen elsewhere<sup>1</sup>; the day of the Schubertian lyric was not yet. But things like the two-part 'When Myra sings', with its exquisite end, the glowing 'Anacreon's defeat', the powerful 'Fly swift, ye hours', and plenty of others, contain most beautiful music; and a self-contained section of a lengthy 'Elegy on the death of Mr. John Playford' may be quoted in full as one of its composer's most tender and pathetic pages—the skill with which the accentuation of the ground-bass is varied is typical of Purcell's methods—

No. 80.

[Moderately slow]

Muses, bring your Ro-ses hither, Strew them gently on his hearse, Muses,

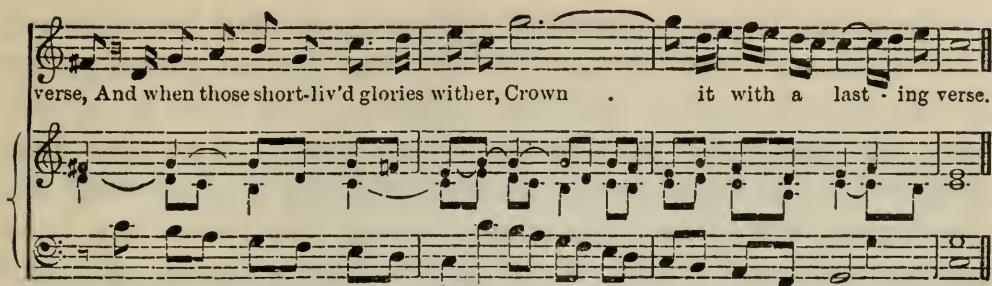
[*pp e legatissimo*]

[*basso poco marcato*]

bring your Roses hither, Strew them gently on his hearse, And when those short-liv'd glories

wit-her, Crown it with a last-ing verse, Crown it with a last - - - ing

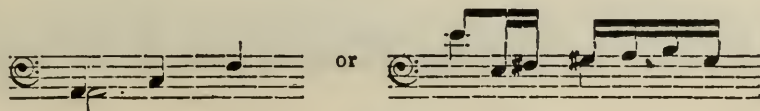
<sup>1</sup> The running quaver tune of 'Corinna, I excuse thy face', in the sixth book of *The Banquet of Music*, is, however, technically of a very uncommon kind.



There are numerous catches and rounds, usually of a more or less definitely bacchanalian character, by Purcell and his contemporaries scattered up and down Playford's various collections; but it is only occasionally that the coarseness of the bulk of the words is redeemed by any special point or humour in the music, which, as a rule, lacks both the *finesse* of the earlier type and the pleasant cheerfulness of the best examples of the later. Sometimes, it is true, we meet with really astonishingly brilliant little things, as, for example, Purcell's 'Fie, nay prithee, John,' but, on the whole, these pothouse effusions add nothing worth mentioning to the artistic reputation of either Purcell or any of the others. The preface to the *Pleasant Musical Companion* can complacently remark that the pieces contained in it 'will neither give offence to the nicest judgments or be ingrateful to the most delicate and distinguishing Ears'; but, except for the sake of completeness, we might, indeed, have left the whole of these trifling compositions unmentioned.

In the instrumental music of the period Purcell is again by far the greatest figure. Though twelve of his twenty-two sonatas are described as being in three parts and the remaining ten in four, there is really no such difference as this would suggest, as all are alike written for two violins and violoncello (or other bass stringed instrument), with a harpsichord or organ doubling the bass, and also supplying harmonies on the lines of the indicated figures; the sole facts that cause ten of the sonatas to be described as in four parts instead of in three are that the part written for the harpsichord player differs from that of the violoncellist in a tiny handful of bars, but almost always only as a variant, e. g.—

No 81.



WALKER

N

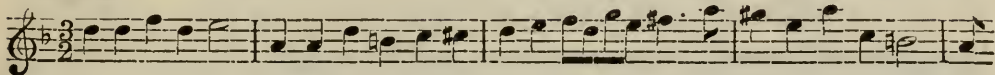


and was published separately—possibly it may be, however, that when such was the case, the keyboard player was expected to ‘fill up’ in a more elaborate manner than when he simply used the same bass part as the violoncellist.<sup>1</sup> The three-part sonatas are, indeed, on the whole distinctly slighter and less interesting works than the others, though their structure is on the same general lines. No. 6 in C major, with the ingenious twofold augmented canons in its opening movement, is, perhaps, the finest, though there are plenty of other striking movements, such as the charming Canzona of No. 3 in D minor and the impressive Largo of No. 9 in C minor. But the four-part works are of altogether more important calibre; though we see, in general outline, the plan of four alternating slow and quick movements (beginning with a slow one) which, later on, became the classical sonata form in Bach and Handel, yet Purcell often enlarges and alters. No. 6 in G minor consists, indeed, solely of a very long and remarkably fine Passacaglia on a five-bar ground-bass theme, the irregular rhythm of which secures all the needed variety, even though it is never even once transposed or altered, as is very often the case with the composer’s ground-bass pieces; and of the other nine all but one are in five movements (even if we may not count Nos. 3, 5, and 7 as being in six, short as the extra sections are), while Nos. 7 and 9 begin with a quick measure, and so display still more flexibility of design. While it is true that Purcell does not in these works show his full individuality as we can see it elsewhere, yet in a sense they are his most serious efforts; there is not the faintest trace of any desire to please any one but himself, and there is none of the sort of popular scrappiness of structure that is so frequently noticeable with the instrumental interludes in the anthems. He was working on Italian models rather than giving free play to his own ideas, and, consequently, the typical Purcellian note is hardly sounded fully in these sonatas; but there are splendid things everywhere, and Purcell can by no means altogether succeed in hiding himself behind

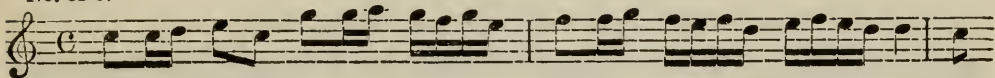
<sup>1</sup> The editor of the ‘four-part’ sonatas for the Purcell Society apparently takes this view; his suggested pianoforte part is very brilliant and complex.

his serious counterpoint. Fugal subjects like these from Nos. 4 and 7 respectively—

No. 82 a.



No. 82 b.



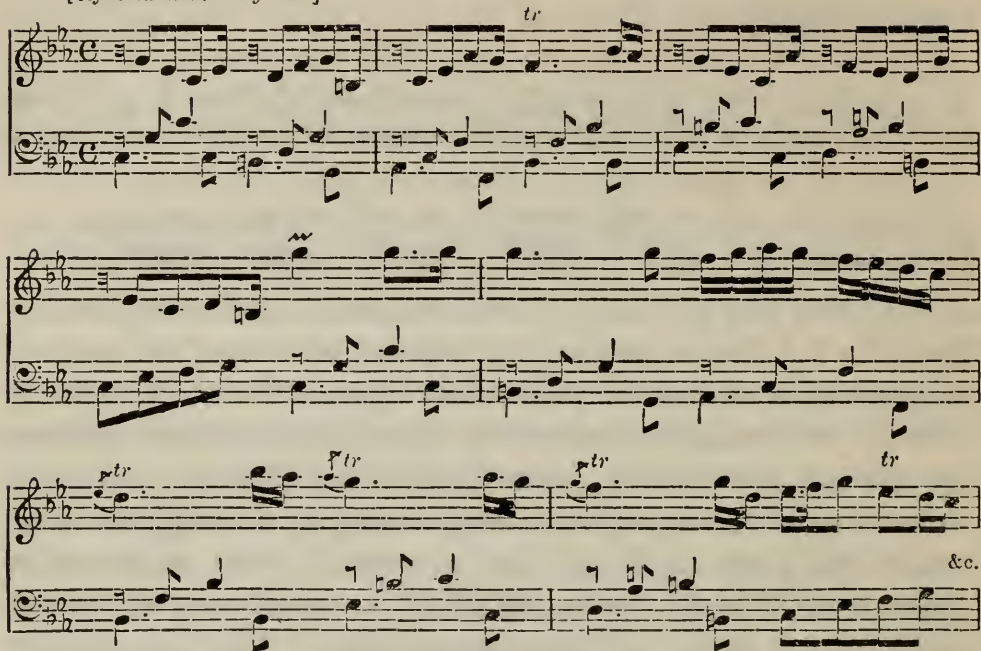
are full of a sort of breezy directness that reminds us of many things in the theatre music, and, indeed, all over these sonatas we find pages of massive joyousness expressed with singularly clear-cut workmanship, varied by charmingly delicate sections like the last two of No. 2, or the final Vivace of No. 8—a piquant outburst on a *moto perpetuo* bass, which is a delightful contrast to the fine long Largo that precedes it; but, on the other hand, there are not a few pages which are relatively characterless and, so to speak, vaguely cosmopolitan. We have already noticed something of the same kind in connexion with the Fantasies of Orlando Gibbons, and, indeed, English composers have very rarely found their true *métier* in purely abstract music; extremely fine as are the best things in these sonatas, and polished as they all are right through, Purcell required something else than abstract Italian models to arouse his most individual powers.

But we must not depreciate his harpsichord music, which, like the sonatas, contains very beautiful things—as a rule slighter and daintier than the works we have just been examining, and less influenced by ‘serious’ models. In these little suites and dance-like pieces we come much nearer Purcell’s typical methods, though nearly all are designed on a tiny scale; the ‘choice collection of lessons’, in particular, are bright with a sort of dewy freshness of singularly attractive quality, and some of the ‘Grounds’ rise to higher flights, while at the same time retaining the individuality of utterance more definitely than most of the sonatas do. Indeed, we could not find any solo instrumental music of the seventeenth century, whether in England or on the continent, showing finer qualities, both of design and expression, than the Ground in C minor—



No. 83.

[Soft and moderately slow]



where the refrain alternates with subtly expressive variations, and there are not a few others, such as a Ground in E minor, or a delightful 'Ground in Gamut,' that fall very little, if at all, short of this. Indeed, this solo work is, for distinctive qualities, comparable with nothing in the same medium in English music, save a small handful of the best work of the madrigalian era, to which, indeed, it is much superior; by the very nature of the instruments for which it was written, it could not aim at anything like grandeur, but it caught what it did aim at with both its hands and held it fast.

Certainly no other composer of Purcell's time came even approximately near rivalling him in this respect; Blow's genius seems to have collapsed entirely when he dealt with instrumental forms. The next best harpsichord composer of the men born under the Commonwealth or Charles II was Clarke, whose work is indeed more vital, slight though it is, than the more ambitious productions of the older Restorationists like Rogers. A collection of suites published in 1707 is not without considerable expressiveness of a somewhat mild kind; and the little volume of harpsichord airs (1700), the joint work of Clarke, Blow, the younger Croft,<sup>1</sup> and two quite unimportant

<sup>1</sup> See chapter viii.

composers named Francis Piggot and John Barrett, contains a few tiny things of Clarke like the 'Trumpett Minnuett', 'The Serenade', and two or three Marches (one, 'The Prince of Denmark's March', is entitled 'Round O', viz. Rondo), which are really, in their evanescent style, extremely fresh and spirited, and much brighter than anything else in the collection,<sup>1</sup> which is, as a whole, decidedly dull and both melodically and harmonically lacking in notable quality.

The main feature of the whole of the music of the Restoration period is the emergence of the art into the full atmosphere of secularity and publicity; the old church chains were definitely snapped, and with them also went (purely accidental as was the connexion) the old intimate appeal to the few. Now the appeal was gradually becoming more indiscriminate; gradually there becomes visible the pressure on a composer to write to satisfy some one else more primarily than himself, to underline his effects, to do something or another to secure success among his inferiors in artistic knowledge. The great men fought on the whole manfully for the rights that are the indefeasible heritage of every creative worker who preserves his self-respect; but they could not altogether stem the current, and sometimes indeed they were swept away by it. It is not believable that a supreme genius like Purcell could have been personally satisfied with the pottering scrappiness of some of his work: it is obvious enough that it was written, in as musicianly a style as he could, to satisfy the rather elementary tastes of people who could not bring their minds to grasp organisms of any sort of largeness. No doubt, as a general rule, the music of Purcell's time preserves a certain dignity of manner, even when indulging in more or less undignified rhythms, and at its highest it rises, as we have seen, to sheer splendour; but still there is an element of uncertainty about it. Virile and subtle as it is, it is not always immaculate in

<sup>1</sup> The music is prefaced by some 'Directions to the Learner', from which we gather that the contemporary way of fingering the scale of C major was to use the thumb only once in two octaves (in either hand), two of the middle fingers being continually passed one over the other; this was also, we know, the fingering adopted by Purcell. The thumb was only just coming into use in England; the figures employed were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, the first indicating the thumb of the right hand, but the little finger of the left.



taste; it is of extraordinary interest, but it leads virtually nowhere. What, however, might have been the course of English music, but for the crushing influence of Handel, it is idle to speculate; certainly Purcell's genius had no immediate successor, but his music was widely revered, and might have borne great fruit, had it been allowed free scope. As it is, English music of the last quarter of the seventeenth century is an artistic cul-de-sac: and it is no consolation to us to reflect that the work of its great supplanter has turned out to be another.

## CHAPTER VII

### HANDEL IN ENGLAND

It is a singular fact that the composer who has left the deepest impress on English music should have been a German who came to this country as an upholder of a purely Italian art ; and yet, even if his influence had been evanescent, it would be difficult for a historian of anything less than the whole of music to rank him as other than an English musician. George Frederic Handel<sup>1</sup> lived in or near London for over forty-five years ; and he was a naturalized Englishman.<sup>2</sup> Few music-lovers know, and fewer ever hear, a note of the music that he wrote either in Germany or in Italy ; it was exclusively for English audiences that he wrote every work in virtue of which he is one of the great composers, and none of all these, except three or four of the operas, seem to have been performed abroad during his lifetime, high as was the honour in which his name was always held. After the *Passion* to Brockes' poem (1716) Handel never set a line in his native language ; from that time forward he was, so far as his countrymen by birth were concerned, artistically dead.

It was as a writer of Italian opera that Handel came to England ; but this fashionable exotic was then of very recent growth. Purcell's influence had apparently died with him ; *Dido and Aeneas* had opened the way to a land of promise, but no one seemed sufficiently interested in the prospect to proceed any further. And so, with that curious partiality for the musical traditions of any nation but its own that the English public has so often shown, the music-purveyors of the time turned to Italy for something fresh : the second-hand

<sup>1</sup> This spelling is adopted here as that always used by the composer in his later years ; Hendel is no doubt a closer version of the original Händel, and the name is found so in the MSS. of the Italian period (1706-1710), but very rarely afterwards.

<sup>2</sup> His naturalization Act was passed by Parliament early in 1726 ; but he had called himself an English subject for several years previously.



French style which Charles the Second had patronized had lost its newness, and the reputation of Italian opera-music and Italian singers was rapidly spreading beyond the Alps. It was not indeed the first time that Italy had influenced English vocal art; the madrigals of Marenzio and Croce and Gastoldi and other Italians of the period were, as we have already seen, well known in this country and had much bearing on the secular music of the Elizabethans. But the English madrigal, though the original idea was foreign, was the natural expression of the genius of some of our greatest men; Italian opera in England, on the other hand, remained to the end of its days an 'exotic and irrational entertainment'.<sup>1</sup> It was exotic, not so much because the majority of the listeners did not well understand the language—the music was the chief thing to which to listen, and they could easily learn what the words were about—but because it was strangely believed that no other language was admissible for artistic opera<sup>2</sup>; and it was irrational, because the composer's own designs were fettered at every turn by the necessity of conciliating the singers. The musical world has never seen a race of men and women whose outlook was so entirely bounded by the horizon of their own little vanities as the great vocal stars of the early eighteenth century; solo singers have indeed been as a rule, up to a time that is only a few years past, artistically the lowest class of musicians, but the full-blown tyrannously selfish conceit of the *prima donna* and *primo uomo* of Handel's day was something quite unique. On pain of a displeasure which would have wrecked the whole concern, the composer had continually to be writing his music round the particular voices of Cuzzoni or Faustina, Caffarelli or Farinelli, affording suitably frequent and varied opportunities for personal display, minimizing mutual jealousies,<sup>3</sup> and consequently letting the organic features of his work take care of

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Still, in the eighteenth century, the composers of 'Italian Opera' designed their music to that language; the English public had not then, as it has very frequently done in later times, demanded the translation of originally French or German works into Italian in order to be performed in London—the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity.

<sup>3</sup> It is credibly reported that the opera-manager of to-day does not live on a bed of roses; but, at any rate, the composer is free, which is the main thing.

themselves; opportunities for anything like dramatic characterization were few and far between, and the net result was a collection of stereotyped airs strung together by the slenderest threads. The audiences cared nothing for the story of the opera, even if they could have understood the formal recitatives in which the actors carried on the narrative (which were indeed practically invariably omitted on publication); the entertainment was simply a concert with scenery and costume, in which singers competed strenuously with each other for the favour of the arbiters of taste and fashion.

Had Anglo-Italian opera not been supported by the genius of Handel, it is very probable that it would have perished in its earliest infancy; before Handel's arrival in 1710 its vitality was very precarious. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there were some attempts in that direction during the reign of Charles II, but the steady invasion seems to have begun in 1692, when the *London Gazette* announced that 'the *Italian lady*, that is lately come over, that is so famous for her singing' would sing at York Buildings every Tuesday, and at Freeman's-yard, Cornhill, every Thursday, throughout the season; Signor Tosi, 'the celebrated author of a Treatise on Singing', gave a 'Consort of Musick' in Charles Street, Covent Garden, in April, 1693, and was emboldened by its success to do the same weekly, at York Buildings, throughout the ensuing winter. In the subsequent years we hear of occasional similar concerts by Italian singers; at the beginning of the eighteenth century they became increasingly frequent, and in 1703 Signora Francesca Margarita de l'Epine—who has been identified, but apparently without authority, with the anonymous 'Italian lady' of 1692—gave a series of 'positively last' appearances throughout the summer season, but nevertheless remained in England for many years, and was one of the chief stars in Handel's earlier operas.<sup>1</sup> In 1703

<sup>1</sup> At one of her appearances at Drury Lane Theatre (probably at a concert, not an operatic performance) on February 5, 1704, a servant of Mrs. Tofts, a rival singer, hissed and threw oranges at her, and was thereupon taken into custody by the police; Mrs. Tofts wrote to the *Daily Courant* indignantly denying all complicity, but no one seems to have believed her. This is probably the earliest instance of operatic jealousy in England; later on it was usually expressed more adroitly.



and 1704 there were a few attempts to return to the old type of English opera; Purcell's *Fairy Queen* and the earlier *Psyche* of Lock and *Circe* of Banister were revived, and a 'new musical entertainment, after the manner of an opera' called *Britain's Happiness* was simultaneously produced at the Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields theatres in two versions, the former the joint work of Weldon and Dieupart, the latter solely by Leveridge. But the run of each of them was very short, and on January 16, 1705, *Arsinoe*, a regular opera 'after the Italian model'—i. e. with the dialogues and narrative set to recitative—was produced at Drury Lane; the music was adapted from various Italian songs by Thomas Clayton, who had been a member of the Royal band in the previous reign. The words were taken from an Italian libretto some thirty years old, but the whole performance was in English, except for some dancing and Italian singing before and after the opera by Signora de l'Epine; indeed the English public does not seem to have had the least wish for the Italian language in itself, and it was only the superior merit of the Italian-speaking singers who visited England in increasing numbers that ultimately banished from the opera-houses the language of their frequenters. The transition, however, took only a very few years: the *Camilla* of Marc Antonio Bononcini<sup>1</sup>—one of the most celebrated of contemporary Italian operas—was first performed in England on April 30, 1706, and had much success; at first it was sung in English, but on December 6, 1707, a bilingual performance was given, three of the vocalists (including Valentini, one of the earliest of the *castrati*) singing in Italian and the rest in English. Similar performances were frequently given for the next year or two, Alessandro Scarlatti's *Pirro e Demetrio* (in which Nicolini, a famous artificial soprano, first appeared in England) sharing with *Camilla* and a pasticcio<sup>2</sup> entitled *Thomyris* the chief popular honours; but still the strict nationalists tried to hold their own with a handful of productions, including an extremely poor setting of Addison's

<sup>1</sup> A younger brother of the more famous Giovanni.

<sup>2</sup> Pasticcio was the name given to a kind of medley opera, the music of which was selected from different works, frequently by many different composers.

*Rosamond* by Clayton,<sup>1</sup> and an early 'Ballad Opera' based on traditional folk-songs, under the name of *The Wonders in the Sun, or The Kingdom of the Birds*. But the fashion set by the wonderful voices of the singers who knew no language but Italian grew rapidly too strong to be resisted; and in January, 1710, *Almahide*, the first purely Italian opera ever performed in England, was produced, and was quickly followed by Mancini's *L'Idaspe fidele* and Marc Antonio Bononcini's *Etearco*—the only three entirely non-English operas previous to Handel's.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the interest aroused by the Italian singers, there can be little doubt that Italian opera would never have secured a firm footing in London had it not been supported by Handel. There is ample evidence that English opera would have prospered well enough had there been anybody capable of writing one worth hearing<sup>3</sup>; but men like Clayton had no conceivable chance against the weakest of the foreigners. Still, before Handel's coming, a musician might perhaps hesitate between the rival parties; while after the production of *Rinaldo* on February 24, 1711, English opera, though never becoming altogether extinct, meekly tendered its submission—the effects of which are palpable enough to the present day.

Though Handel, who was born at Halle in 1685, was only twenty-five at the time of his first appearance in England, he was already a musician of great and wide reputation, both as composer and as executant. While resident in Hamburg between 1704 and 1706 he had produced numerous works of importance with much success; and during his subsequent stay of from three to four years in Italy, where he visited all the principal cities, his pen had been busy with operas, oratorios, serenatas, psalms, motets, and a mass of smaller things, both vocal and instrumental.<sup>4</sup> Of all these the opera

<sup>1</sup> Extracts are printed by Hawkins.

<sup>2</sup> The composer of *Almahide* is unknown, but Burney is inclined to attribute it to Bononcini. No. 13 of *The Spectator* may be consulted for an amusing account of Mancini's work; 'the lion in *Hydaspes*' was a famous butt for a long time.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the appendix to *A Comparison between the French and Italian Music* (1709), quoted by Fuller Maitland, *The Age of Bach and Handel*, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> Very much of this material was utilized in later works.



*Agrippina*, brought out at Venice in 1708, was the most brilliantly successful; and the enthusiastic approbation of Prince Ernest Augustus of Hanover and of several English noblemen who happened to be in Venice at the time had no doubt much to do, firstly with Handel's appointment as Kapellmeister to the Elector of Hanover two years later, and secondly, with the warm welcome he received when, having obtained leave of absence from his duties, he came, a few months afterwards, to England.

*Rinaldo* (in which some of the music of *Agrippina* was incorporated) met with a success that altogether dwarfed that achieved by any previous opera in England; but Handel only stayed in London seven or eight months, and then returned to Germany. But the duties of Kapellmeister at a quiet Court were not to his taste; the applause of a large public was throughout his whole career the breath of life to him, and the autumn of 1712 saw him back again in London. *Teseo* rivalled *Rinaldo* in popularity, and Handel forgot altogether about his duties on the other side of the Channel; he wrote a patriotic *Te Deum* for the celebration of the Peace of Utrecht, received a life pension from Queen Anne, and settled down comfortably to a pleasant existence, enjoying the favour of the court and aristocracy and the friendship of all congenial spirits in the society of London. When his neglected master ascended the English throne as George I, there was naturally a withdrawal of royal support; but ultimately the truant was forgiven and his pension augmented.

For more than half of all the years that Handel spent in England, he was *par excellence* a writer of operas. Fortune varied; sometimes he lived in the full sunshine of popular success, sometimes the expenditure considerably overbalanced the receipts—indeed to the extent of the bankruptcy of the composer, who added to his musical activities those of the speculative impresario. From 1717 to 1720, when no Italian operas were given in London, he lived at the country seat of the Duke of Chandos near Edgware, occupying himself mainly with *Acis and Galatea*, the *Chandos Anthems*, and *Esther*, his first oratorio; but till he was over fifty years of age opera was his main pursuit. Indeed, he only ultimately

turned his attention elsewhere in consequence of the disastrous effects due to a combination of rivalries—a competing opera-house under the musical direction of Giovanni Bononcini, supported by an influential section of the nobility, and a democratic success in the shape of *The Beggar's Opera*, a piece made up of popular melodies gathered from all sources, which drew crowds to the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Against his ill-fortune he struggled for some time; but in 1732 a revival of *Esther* (which had been forced upon him in consequence of a pirated performance by an unscrupulous speculator) had met with great favour, and had turned his thoughts into other channels. At the time he had not explored the new vein further than *Deborah* and *Athaliah*; but he continued to perform these oratorios, with other works, like *Acis and Galatea*, to which we should not now give the title, on Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent and other occasions as alternatives to the operas. Finally, when it became quite certain that opera would no longer pay, he turned altogether in the new direction; obviously the preliminary expenses, at any rate, were less heavy, and the oratorios had the attraction of a certain novelty. Whatever may have been the case with the original performance of *Esther* at the Duke of Chandos' seat, there was not the very faintest tinge of a religious service about any of the later oratorios; they were not at all meant to be devotional, but were practically as much 'polite and elegant entertainments' as anything else given in the theatres, though treated in a different style and with different accessories—indeed, *The Messiah* is the only one the outlook of which is in any way sharply differentiated from that of the secular works.

The first performance of *The Messiah*<sup>1</sup> took place at Dublin on April 13, 1742; Handel spent nearly a year in Ireland, and it is curious that, considering the exceptionally warm welcome with which he met, he never revisited it. Indeed, it was not for some time further that his position in London was fully secure; though Bononcini had left England in 1733, his aristocratic partisans still did their best to stand

<sup>1</sup> Between it and *Athaliah* Handel had written two other oratorios, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*.



in Handel's way, giving specially brilliant parties on the nights when the oratorio performers 'sang and made brave hallelujahs' (as Horace Walpole says), and generally making themselves as objectionable as they could, while the royal favour which Handel continued to enjoy was not much more practically valuable than such things usually are. The result was that, after between 1743 and 1745 producing *Samson*, *Semele*, *Joseph and his brethren*, *Hercules*, and *Belshazzar*, Handel became bankrupt for the second time; but still neither his power of composition nor his enterprise suffered any check. His later oratorios, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Alexander Balus*, *Joshua*, *Solomon*, *Susanna*, *Theodora*, and *Jephtha*, met, indeed, with varying degrees of appreciation, but his old age was on the whole serene and comfortable; opposition gradually died away, and he was at length left in undisturbed enjoyment of the position to which his genius entitled him. But the affliction of blindness, though borne with a patience very exceptional in so naturally impatient a man, darkened the end; and after the completion of *Jephtha* in 1751 he composed hardly anything but a few additional numbers to earlier works, the most important being those written for a largely-revised English version, under the title of *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, of an early oratorio of 1708, already revised, but still in Italian, in 1737. He died on April 14, 1759, and was buried in Westminster Abbey six days later.

We are not here concerned with the works that Handel wrote for performance outside England; and indeed, apart from a few things here and there in *Rodrigo* or *La Resurrezione*, in the chamber vocal duets, or in the Passion-music to Brockes' poem, they are of merely historical interest, while much of the material was utilized in improved form in the composer's later productions. As we have already said, it is by the music written for English audiences that his name lives; and it would consequently seem impossible, German though he was by blood, to omit consideration of them in a history of English music. To the historian London is Handel's artistic home fully as much as Vienna is that of non-Austrians like Beethoven or Brahms.

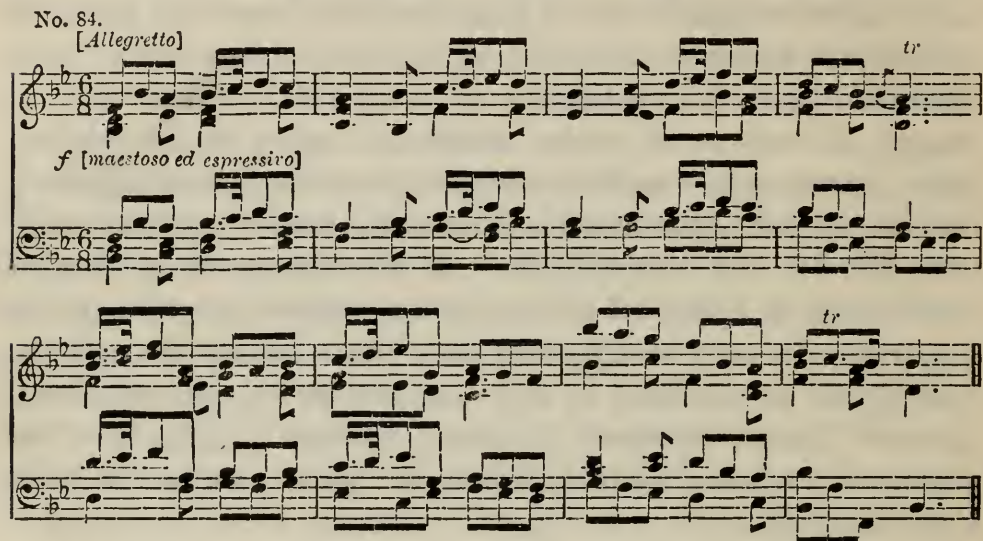
The thirty-six Italian operas that Handel wrote in England

are, save for a small handful of selected songs, little more than a name to the great majority of present-day music-lovers; they have been totally overshadowed by the oratorios, and the particular kind of audience to which, in their entirety, they appealed has been extinct for many a long year. Earlier in this chapter we have seen of what the ideal opera of Handel's aristocratic patrons consisted; and remembrance of all this, combined with the realization of the virtual impossibility of staging nowadays an entire Handelian opera in its original shape, has prevented most musicians from undertaking anything like an adequate examination of the huge mass of operatic work that Handel left behind him. It has consequently become traditional to speak of it as greatly inferior to that of the oratorios, yet very many, after carefully reading through the operas, will be inclined to feel that serious injustice has been done to them; unequal in merit though they are, these neglected volumes contain some of their composer's most beautiful music.

No doubt we find in all of them a great deal of more or less perfunctory work: there are many pages of mere conventional vocal display, and the current of melodic inspiration sometimes runs very thin. Anything like dramatic individualization is of but rare occurrence; as a general rule all the characters, however virtuous or vicious, and of whatever age or race, sing the same sort of music, with the same rigid five kinds of arias—the *aria cantabile*, the *aria di portamento*, the *aria di mezzo carattere*, the *aria parlante*, and the particularly favourite *aria d'agilità*—into one or other of which groups all the specimens we possess can be allotted. But, as we shall shortly see, Handel's operas have no monopoly of dullness; and indeed, if we compare the average solo numbers of the oratorios and the operas, it may fairly be argued that the opera-level is on the whole the higher. We must, indeed, remove the oratorio-choruses out of the sphere of comparison; apart from the regular concluding ensembles of soloists and occasional short fragments of choral work—*Giustino* shows several examples, but they are not common—the operas have no choruses. But if the operas never reach the massive dignity of the finest choral parts of the oratorios, there are very few of the oratorio airs



which can rival the melodic breadth and the distinctive, subtle, polish that we find not infrequently among the operas. Take for example the really superb 'Vieni, torna' from *Teseo*, from which we may quote the concluding symphony as typical of the sonorous part-writing and grand swing of the whole—



scored with massive richness, and full of a strong emotional exaltation for the like of which we might search in vain through oratorio after oratorio; or again there is the hardly inferior contralto air from the same opera, 'Le luci del mio bene,' a great spacious melody that is astonishingly little known, full of warmth and vocally most effective. Massive tunes of this kind are most rare in the strictly religious oratorios (the half-secular cantatas show more of them), but, though indeed very few reach the level of 'Vieni, torna', they occur fairly often in the operas; the phrases are finely balanced, and the whole melody is firmly conceived as an organic unity—not too usual a feature in Handelian melodies, unfortunately. More frequent, and in their way no less beautiful, are the airs in which the melody takes shorter flights. 'Rendi'l sereno al ciglio'<sup>1</sup> from *Sosarme* is one of the most perfect examples of an air of this kind in the deeply tranquil, pathetic, vein; 'Voglio dire al mio tesoro' from *Partenope*, 'Voi dolci aurette al cor' from *Tolomeo*, or 'Con rauco mormorio' from

<sup>1</sup> Formerly fairly familiar, with adapted words, as 'Lord, remember David.'

*Rodelinda*, are fine specimens in other moods. And the florid arias, more or less mere vocalism though a good many of them are, rise not infrequently, as in 'Confusa si mira' from *Rodelinda*, or 'Del minacciar del vento' from *Ottone*, to a sort of distinctiveness of utterance that we very rarely see in similar numbers from the oratorios. Dramatic characterization is, as has been said, not common, and in many operas the various personages all sing music that for all practical purposes is dramatically interchangeable; but there are exceptions, and, indeed, not altogether so few as is sometimes thought. As a rule, it must be remembered, the libretto affords no glimmer of assistance towards the attainment of such an end; but when it displays some sort of dramatic possibility, Handel usually rises to the occasion—not, indeed, as a revolutionary like Gluck would have done (Handel was a pure conservative in such things), but still far more definitely and successfully than any of his contemporaries. Certain striking situations, such as the madness of the hero in *Orlando*, Handel can depict with what, considering the heavy trammels of the operatic conventions, is very real power; the Siren's song in *Rinaldo*, with its hauntingly persistent cadence rhythm, produces a curiously soporific effect; and one of the greatest things in the operas, the contralto air 'Stille amare' from *Tolomeo*, with its wonderfully expressive introductory 'accompanied recitative'<sup>1</sup> (a rare feature), paints with singularly touching pathos the dying utterances of the hero—the end indeed is an example, and a very beautiful one too, of sheer realism. Though, it is true, they will have to wade through many dull pages, and often undergo the disappointment of meeting arias with beautiful opening phrases that come to very little afterwards, yet singers of an enterprising turn of mind have in these volumes of Handel's Anglo-Italian operas a rich and almost unworked mine; the best-known selections, like 'Lascia ch' io pianga' from *Rinaldo*, 'Verdi prati' from *Alcina*, or 'Ombra mai fù' from *Serse*, fine as they are, only represent one sort of operatic air, and that not the greatest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> i. e. scored for more than the customary merely supporting long-held chords on a figured bass.

<sup>2</sup> For the benefit of the reader who may be interested in the subject, the



Before turning to the consideration of the choral works, a few words must be given to Handel's instrumental music. The mass of such work is considerable, including, besides seventeen suites and a great quantity of smaller pieces for harpsichord solo, numerous concertos for organ and for other instruments, sonatas for one or more stringed instruments, and pieces (principally dance-tunes) for full orchestra; but it must be confessed that there is only very little of it which shows any sort of distinctiveness of utterance. A few things here and there—isolated parts of the harpsichord suites, such as the Fugue in E minor from No. 4, a movement or two in the concertos, the brilliant 'Water' and 'Firework' music, the violin sonata in A major and portions of some of the others—show music that arrests and fixes the attention; but such interruptions to the drowsy reader are rare. The great bulk is mere jog-trot solid conventionalism of the kind that could apparently be reeled off *ad infinitum*, and virtually destitute of any invention worth the name; to see Handel at his worst, we have only to look at such productions as the sixty-two variations on a Chaconne for harpsichord—the kind of poverty-stricken work that any one with a thousandth part of Handel's genius could have turned out by the square yard. And of this sort of thing there are pages and pages; we no doubt come across real music here and there—music that lives and breathes—but it requires a great deal of searching.

As we have seen, Handel and his public more or less habitually included under the general name of oratorios, various choral

following brief list of some of the best airs may be subjoined:—'Lascia ch' io pianga,' 'Il vostro maggio' (*Rinaldo*); 'Ricordati, o bella,' 'Vieni torna,' 'Le luci del mio bene' (*Teseo*); 'Gioje venite in sen' (*Amadigi*); 'Ombra cara' (*Radamisto*); 'Le profonde vie dell' onde,' 'Ritorna, o dolce amore,' 'Affanni del pensier,' 'Del minacciar del vento' (*Ottone*); 'Benchè povera donzella' (*Flavio*); 'Piangerò la sorte mia,' 'Empio, diro tu sei' (*Giulio Cesare*); 'Con rauco mormorio,' 'Confusa si mira,' 'Ritorna, o caro' (*Rodelinda*); 'Pensa, o bella' (*Scipione*); 'Lusinghe più care' (*Alessandro*); 'Ah, si moro' (*Admeto*); 'Caro, vieni a me' (*Riccardo Primo*); 'O placido il mare' (*Siroe*); 'Voi dolci aurette al cor,' 'Stille amare' (*Tolomeo*); 'Per salvarti, idolo mio' (*Lothario*); 'Voglio dire al mio tesoro,' 'Sì, scherza sempre Amor' (*Partenope*); 'Dov' è?' 'Son confusa pastorella' (*Porò*); 'Rendi 'l sereno al ciglio' (*Sosarme*); 'Sorge, infausta,' 'Verdi allori' (*Orlando*); 'Volate, amori' (*Ariodante*); 'Verdi prati,' 'Pensa a che geme d' amor' (*Alcina*); 'Come alla tortorella' (*Atalanta*); 'Vado a morir' (*Arminio*); 'Si tra i ceppi' (*Berenice*); 'Sento che un giusto sdegno' (*Faramondo*); 'Ombra mai fù,' 'Caro voi siete all' alma' (*Serse*).

works to which more modern custom generally denies the title; but it is on the whole most convenient to consider in one large group the strictly religious oratorios, the works which nowadays would probably be called cantatas, and such extended service-music as the Chandos and the other anthems. Roughly speaking, the same qualities are shown in them all alike; and to separate them with any rigid lines of demarcation is to give false impressions. As we have seen, the oratorio was in Handel's day an 'entertainment' just as much as was the opera; and there was little place in the Anglican service of the time for the expression of the spirit that breathes through the church cantatas of Bach. Any artistic expression of pietism of the North German type would, to the average member of Handel's London audiences,<sup>1</sup> have seemed both dull and impertinent; and the composer was consequently thrown back on a style which remains in essentials virtually the same whether the words are of a religious character or not.

The history of art can hardly show a parallel to the enormous influence which Handel exercised over English music for well-nigh a century after his death; even yet the composer's name is a sort of national fetish with thousands of people who could not for their lives see any difference of quality between the best and the worst things in *The Messiah* or *Israel in Egypt*. *The Messiah* is, indeed, still a part of the average Englishman's religion, and he criticizes its music no more than he criticizes its words; and though it is true that now almost all Handel's other large works are, as wholes, but seldom performed, yet many extracts from them still display their popular halo almost untarnished by lapse of time and changes of fashion. Handel himself, as we have seen, took originally to oratorio-writing simply as an experiment towards recapturing the favour of his patrons among the gentry and nobility who had grown tired of Italian opera; but the experiment, risky as it was, secured alike the virtual extinction of original English music for more than a hundred years, and the artistic canoni-

<sup>1</sup> Though Handel's German *Passions* show how much he could, in a different environment, adapt himself to the tastes of his countrymen by birth: the absolute difference between their style and that of the oratorios is most startling.



zation of the experimenter. No other musical work in the history of the world has won the kind of homage which in England has fallen to the lot of *The Messiah*; and none, in spite of all its genius, has had a more crushing influence on national artistic individuality.

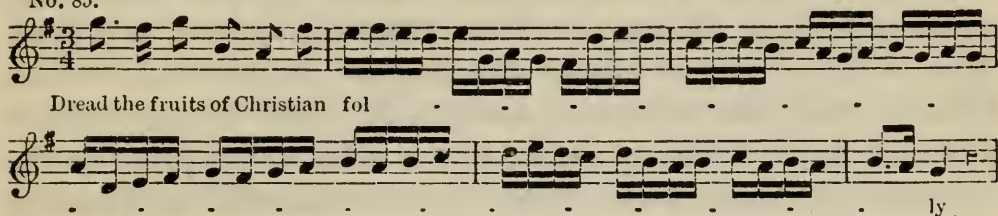
Yet, passionate as has been the English worship of Handel, we have treated our idol very badly; no other composer who ever lived has had to suffer a tithe of the indignities that we have heaped, and still heap, on his head. The score of *The Messiah* is full of careful directions that at least ninety-nine per cent. of our performances complacently and totally ignore, and only a handful of organists have any notion of even the proper chords of the Dead March in *Saul*; singers with famous names distort his rhythm out of all recognition, and insert top notes that would have driven him wild, and comparatively few people seem to think that it matters in the very least degree whatever. Until quite recent times, hardly any pianoforte arrangement of his music was in existence which did not blandly neglect most of the details of his part-writing, and indeed insert chords the like of which neither he nor his contemporaries ever wrote; and the most vilely ignorant 'traditions' of all kinds have sprung up round wellnigh every page of his works.<sup>1</sup> No doubt of late years a very considerable cleansing process has been set on foot—though there is still a vast amount more to be done; but the curious thing is that this uprising of a proper respect for the intentions of a great composer coincides with a very sharply marked decline of his reputation among such musical circles as artistically count for anything.

Of course it is merely an inevitable reaction against a century's tyranny, and in very many cases (as always happens), the reaction has no doubt gone considerably too far. Still, there is really no denying the truths which lie at the bottom of the revolt of the last twenty years or so; to any one who has once shaken himself free from the old fetters, Handel's

<sup>1</sup> Mozart's 'additional accompaniments'—the earliest of an entirely unnecessary company—were first heard in England in 1805, and were severely and judiciously criticized. Bartleman, the great bass singer of the time, declined to take part in a performance where they were to be used, and carried his point.

faults lie on the surface plainly enough. Any one can now see the acres of complacent commonplaces, devoid alike of invention and workmanship; any one can now, with his eyes open, compare the carelessly conventional twirlings of airs like that of Septimius in *Theodora*, typical of shoals of others—

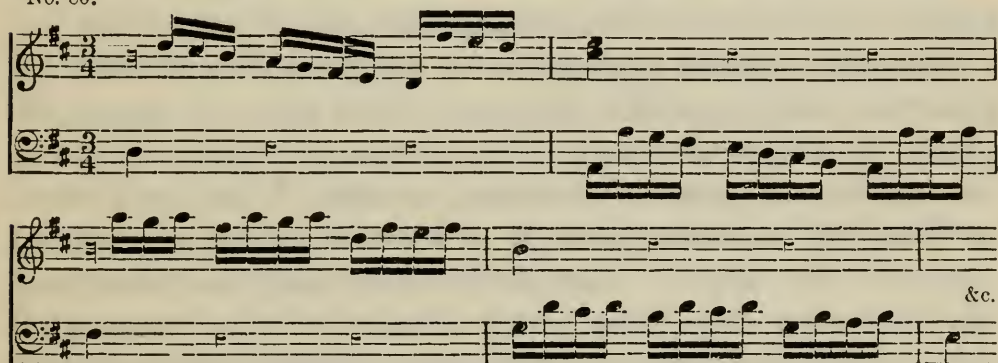
No. 85.



with the decorative vocal writing of Purcell or Bach, or contrast with the methods of other great men such things as (in *Joshua*) the orchestral elucidation of Achsah's words:

Oh who can tell, oh who can hear  
Of Egypt, and not shed a tear?

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Indeed no other composer can even attempt to rival Handel in his power of intensely irritating those who have the strongest and sanest admiration for his genius; no one, it is true, is always at his best, but the pity is that Handel is so very often at his worst.

We can indeed no longer speak of his music, even at its highest, as the supreme crown of the art; the day for that sort of adoration is gone for ever, and we can now see that, secure as is his place among the immortals, he is far from being one of their kings. He was at once too careless and too practical; he lacked the steady self-criticism which rejects inadequate material and, when the material is adequate, looks to its polished presentation, and at the same time he kept an un-



necessarily steady finger on the pulse of his visible public, and, so far as a man of genius could, wrote for the taste of the moment in the spirit of the mere impresario. Though it is true that in the process he never sacrificed personal self-respect, he took up oratorio, as indeed he took up everything else, because he thought it would pay. His sadly unenterprising contemporary at Leipzig—a mere ‘musical director in a commercial city’, as the fashionable Burney sneers—had to wait for something like a century and a half before his supremacy had any chance of being realized; but now the judgements are reversed, and the old idol, hurled down somewhat indignantly from the impossible position that he formerly occupied, is in some danger of being relegated to the rubbish-heap. But it would be a million pities if *The Messiah* were to disappear into the limbo of those artistic works for which the relatively unmusical public retains a superstitious reverence long after the musicians themselves have come to a final, and on the whole—at any rate in comparison—an adverse judgement.

After all, a great man is to be judged ultimately by his greatness; there are, for example, writers who are among the glories of European literature in virtue of a golden handful rescued from a mass of forgotten rubbish. And the student of Handel’s oratorios lives in a state of continual exultant surprise. He may for example be examining the recitatives, and deploring the almost entire absence of the living spirit that breathes through those of Purcell and Bach, when suddenly he comes across wonderful pages like ‘Deeper and deeper still’<sup>1</sup> in *Jephtha*, or ‘Thy rebuke hath broken his heart’ in *The Messiah*; he may be wading through the instrumental movements—the purely perfunctory overtures, and the interludes (the battle symphonies and the rest) that say remarkably little or indeed nothing—and his attention is suddenly caught by a miraculously impressive thing like the Dead March in *Saul*, or one or two other numbers in *Judas Maccabaeus* or *Samson* that are similarly oases in a dreary desert. In gratitude for the gift of magnificent music like ‘The people shall hear’—full

<sup>1</sup> Which has nothing, by the by, to do with ‘Waft her, angels,’ before which it is usually sung; it really leads straight into the chorus ‘How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees’—with far finer effect.

of the thrill that only the immortal things possess—we may well be content to forget the dullness of most of the surrounding pages of *Israel in Egypt*; and the great movements of *The Messiah* more than cover a multitude of sins.

It is very interesting to note how, on the whole (leaving *The Messiah*, which in many respects stands by itself, out of the question) the fire of inspiration burnt more steadily in the non-religious choral works than in those to which we would now, at any rate in England, restrict the name of oratorio. *Acis and Galatea* and *Semele* are perhaps the most equal compositions Handel ever wrote; they possess a sort of freshness and flow of inspiration, and a polished delicacy of workmanship, that, except sporadically, are hardly to be seen in most of the oratorios. It is no doubt difficult for any but convinced devotees to see in *Acis and Galatea* the deep psychological power with which it has been credited, and the overture (according to Handel's usual custom) would fit any other oratorio or opera or cantata practically as well; but there is about the work, taken as a whole, a singular charm and fragrance, the touch is unusually light, and the level of invention, melodic and the rest, unusually high. A chorus like 'Wretched lovers' or an air like 'Love in her eyes sits playing' will show Handel in his most vitalized mood; there are hardly any traces of heaviness or conventionality, and, delicate as is the touch, the grand style is, in all but a comparatively small handful of pages, plainly evident. And there is considerably more characterization than usual, though it is true that there is not much subtlety; the fact that Polyphemus nearly invariably sings in unison with the instrumental bass gives a special gruff quality to his music, and the trio 'The flocks shall leave the mountains', with the delightful pastoral melody for *Acis and Galatea*, and the giant's undercurrent of rage, finally bursting out *solo* as he rolls the rocks on the lovers, is in its way a really dramatic conception.

Though rather more unequal in quality, *Semele* shows the same fine distinction of utterance; we find, it is true, a few airs like *Semele's* 'Myself I shall adore' or 'No, no, I'll take no less' or *Athamas's* 'Despair no more shall wound me', which contain otiose *florituri* that are practically invisible in *Acis*, but these



are of no importance in view of the splendid quality of the great bulk of the work. The airs 'Awake, Saturnia' (one of Handel's very finest inspirations), 'Oh sleep, why dost thou leave me', 'Where'er you walk',<sup>1</sup> the choruses 'Now Love, that everlasting boy', 'Bless the glad earth with heavenly lays', the scenes of the waking of Somnus (his drowsy music is of special and uncommon beauty), of Jupiter's oath<sup>2</sup> and his remorse, of Semele's death—all in their various ways show Handel in some of his most notably original moods; the fire of inspiration burns brightly, and the workmanship never falters. And here again, as in *Acis*, we see that the composer, when he took trouble over his work, could give his characters really individual music to sing; perhaps the most striking example is Juno's spiteful little air 'Above measure is the pleasure which my revenge supplies', which fits the words with a quite exceptional fidelity.

The rest of Handel's secular choral works, of which *Hercules* and the three odes—*St. Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast*, and *L'Allegro*—are the chief, are considerably less fine, though all have some arresting features. *Hercules*, which is designed on the scale of a large oratorio, is for the most part a dull grey sort of work, relieved, however, by a few striking pages, such as Dejanira's splendidly powerful and passionate air 'Where shall I fly', Iole's tender and expressive 'My father', and a small handful of other airs and choruses; the orchestral portrayal of Hercules' madness in the Sinfonia to the third act, with its spasmodic alternations of *Largo* and *Furioso*, is an interesting early experiment in realism. The odes are more distinctive, and the short one for St. Cecilia's Day is one of Handel's most attractive works on a small scale; 'The trumpet's loud clangour'—a tenor solo followed by a chorus—is a brilliantly stirring piece, with a sort of Purcellian directness of style, and the final chorus has singular strength and dignity. *L'Allegro* and *Alexander's Feast*, in spite of a considerable amount that is merely perfunctory, also contain some of Handel's notable work. The former is the slighter of the two, and many of its numbers—

<sup>1</sup> *Largo e pianissimo per tutto*—a curiously definite indication, which is not always, unfortunately, observed in performance.

<sup>2</sup> The representation of the oath by three bars for drums *solì* is one of the most 'modern' things in Handel's works.

including some of the most delicate and picturesque, such as the Siciliano 'Let me wander not unseen', and 'Oft on a plot of rising ground'—are very short<sup>1</sup>; pages such as the twirlings in 'Sweet bird' and where Orpheus 'warbles to the string' show Handel's regrettable lack of humour, but there is plenty of pleasant music, and the differentiation of the characters<sup>2</sup> is on the whole decidedly well carried out. *Alexander's Feast* is stronger, and the words are set with real appreciation of their varied moods; the chorus 'Behold, Darius great and good' is very touching in its way, but the finest part is the connected string of numbers at the beginning of Part II—from 'Now strike the golden lyre' to the famous 'Revenge, Timotheus cries'—which are throughout full of brilliantly stirring music in their composer's most vitalized and individual manner. Yet none of these works, taken as complete wholes, equal *Acis and Galatea* or *Semele*; but still, purely conventional as many pages in them are, we do not somehow see in them (except perhaps in *Hercules*) the specially bald type of conventionalism that the oratorios, when at their worst, can display.

Again, the lengthy *The Triumph of Time and Truth*—a sort of semi-oratorio, a moral allegory containing a few religious 'applications' and ending with a Hallelujah chorus—is in most respects quite different in style from the strict oratorios, except as regards the numbers which are adapted from other works. This is one of Handel's most irretrievably neglected productions, and yet it contains some of his most fresh and charming music. The hunting chorus 'Oh, how great the glory', and that with tenor solo, 'Lo we all attend on Flora' (both not to be found in the earlier versions of the work), are singularly piquant and graceful, and many of the airs of the various characters—Beauty, Pleasure, Deceit, Time—are in different ways of strikingly individual quality. The whole work is indeed somewhat slight in texture, and at its

<sup>1</sup> 'There let the pealing organ blow' contains altogether only seventeen bars of very bare music written out; the rest consists of the indications for three separate organ interludes (the last marked 'very soft'), which are left entirely to the mercy of the performer. Of course, Handel himself would usually take the part, and extemporize.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are mixed up, chiefly in alternate numbers, throughout Parts I and II; *Il Moderato*—Jennens' misplaced addition to Milton—has Part III to itself.



best it hardly does more than charm ; but, apart from the numbers actually borrowed more or less closely from various religious choral works and organ concertos, there is an unusual freshness about its pages.

And, indeed, we may carry this train of investigation a little further, and examine, in the strictly religious oratorios themselves, the passages—not, it is true, very many—where there is some close and definite opposition between secular and religious elements ; where such contrast is necessarily required by the libretto, it is as a rule hard to deny that Handel's individuality shows itself considerably more on the non-religious side. Compare, for example, in *Saul* the powerfully picturesque trio that describes Goliath, ' Along the monster atheist strode ', with the tame respectability of the immediately succeeding ' The youth inspired by thee, O Lord ' ; in *Samson* and *Belshazzar* the Pagan choruses are as a general rule (there are a few exceptions) distinctly the more interesting ; and though the choruses of Christians in *Theodora* include such fine strong work as ' He saw the lovely youth ' and ' O love divine ' <sup>1</sup> and others, yet there is something about ' Queen of summer, queen of love ' and ' Venus, laughing from the skies ', trifles as they are, that strikes a rarer and a subtler note.

But it would be gravely unfair to press this line of argument too far. Almost all this secularly-tinged work, exquisitely fresh and charming though it is, yet, when everything has been said, is of slender character ; in sheer beauty Handel never surpassed and rarely equalled it, but it never touches any even moderately deep springs of feeling. To see Handel at his greatest, we have to leave these pleasant paths and adventure through a country that is to a considerable extent—no one can help confessing it—a desert of peculiar dreariness ; but at the other side we find our goal.

The oratorios (with which we may group other non-secular choral works like the Chandos and other extended anthems, the Te Deums, and the Funeral Ode on the death of Queen

<sup>1</sup> This final chorus makes a striking close, and its sombre, pathetic dignity is really impressive ; Macfarren, in his edition of the oratorio, complains of it on grounds that are a curious combination of the prejudices of the conductor who desires a brilliant climax and of the preacher who wishes to wind up with an attractive moral.

Caroline) are of various characters—sometimes, as *The Messiah*, exclusively religious—sometimes, as *Saul* or *Belshazzar*, vivid drama—sometimes, as *Joshua* or *Joseph* or *Jephtha*, a blend of Biblical history with interpolated ‘love-interest’—sometimes, as *Solomon* or *Israel*, a sort of pageantry of imposing choruses. But in wellnigh every one of the whole lengthy series we shall find, if we look carefully, something of real great distinction, something that is well worth the undistinguished remainder; *The Messiah* is, no doubt, on the whole the most equal of the set, but others, such as *Saul* and, to a somewhat less degree, *Susanna* or *Samson* or *Solomon*, run it very close, and some of the more uneven works, such as *Israel in Egypt*, contain inspirations that rank with anything Handel ever wrote. It is a pity, for Handel’s own sake, that the uncertain chances of things have caused some of his finest pages to be far less known than others of vastly inferior quality; for every one person who knows the colossal ‘Tremble, guilt’ in *Susanna*, there are at least a thousand who admire the perfunctory ‘Honour and arms’, and when we think of an oratorio duet, it is not of ‘Joys before our eyes appearing’ in *Athaliah*, with its delicious Purcellian melody,<sup>1</sup> but of the conventional ‘The Lord is a man of war’. But when we have ferreted out for ourselves the really great pages in the oratorios, not even the most modern-minded revolutionary can fail to be impressed with the sort of elemental grandeur that inspires them. The stern majesty of such pieces as ‘Envy, eldest born of hell’ in *Saul*, or ‘By slow degrees the wrath of God’ in *Belshazzar*, or ‘How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees’ in *Jephtha*, or ‘Earth, tremble’ in *Esther*, or the two mighty choruses in *Israel in Egypt* and *Susanna* that have already been named is, in its own way, unique in music; the

<sup>1</sup> The influence of Purcell upon Handel’s style is not really very often noticeable to any degree worth mentioning, but when it is plainly visible, it is curiously thorough, affecting sometimes not only melody, but harmony, rhythm, part-writing, and everything. The *Utrecht Te Deum* shows it most markedly in the religious music; but perhaps the most remarkable instance of all is the secular chorus ‘Queen of summer’ in *Theodora*, every note of which bears the unmistakable sign-manual of the older composer. *The Triumph of Time and Truth* shows several other nearly equally striking examples, and *Acis and Galatea* has not a little of the Purcellian spirit.

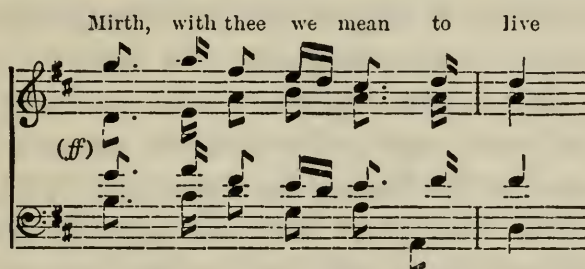


touch is that of a hammering Titan. There is no compromise, no rounding of the sharp edges; the primevally massive music is simply hurled in our faces, to take or to leave. And though no doubt Handel is seen at his greatest in choruses like these and others—*The Messiah* has several—which depend for their enormous impressiveness on sheer strength, wielded in the simplest and most direct manner, yet—within some definite limits—he has remarkable versatility; rapturous brilliance and deep pathos are both well within his reach, and occasionally, as in ‘May no rash intruder’ in *Solomon*, the lion ‘will roar you an ’t were any nightingale’. The method of massive simplicity is no doubt a risky one to be adopted even by a great genius, when he is in the habit (as Handel was) of writing in a terrible hurry; both the composer and his audience are very liable to be misled by the undeniable sort of effect that can be produced by a sufficiently dignified and serious reiteration of anything whatever—witness ‘Immortal Lord of earth and skies’ in *Deborah*, and shoals more. Handel is the only great composer who has placed a virtually blind reliance on the method; very often it plays him false, but when his trust in it is justified, then we must needs bow the head. In solo work the percentage of successes is no doubt smaller than in choral, as the medium (at any rate as clothed in eighteenth-century phraseology) offers fewer chances; but still, when we remember miraculous things like ‘He shall feed his flock’ or ‘Total eclipse’, we do not feel inclined to complain. After all, we must give Handel the credit for being, in a sense, the most courageous great composer who has ever lived; he tried to base his title to immortality on a direct popular appeal. In the process he threw away all chance of influencing the subsequent course of the art; there has never been a composer of more than the merest second-class rank who owes him anything really vital. And not only was he content, with his enormous powers, to stand absolutely out of the line of the great transmitters of the divine fire; he was content to turn out huge masses of work, which, if he ever reflected for a moment, he must have known to be worthless, in a sort of patient certainty that sooner or later the inspiration would come. And when it did

come, then we have the real Handel—the man on whose grave even Beethoven said he would kneel bareheaded.<sup>1</sup>

Handel's technique presents many points of interest; most of it, no doubt, is derived from Italian sources, but he vastly improved on his masters. He had an extraordinary command over all the minutiae of smoothly balanced choral writing; it all looks so simple, but no one else has ever done it in just the same way. His counterpoint runs on velvet; and he can produce effects of dazzling brilliance by magnificently un-academical methods, as in this cadence from the chorus in *L'Allegro*, 'These delights if thou canst give'—

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which is full of wonderful technical points—the sudden drop into consecutive octaves for soprano and tenor on their most telling notes (with the alto out of the way), and the crashing full chords at the end—reached by consecutive fifths, but what does that matter? And so far as the orchestration of his day would allow, he has the sense of colour as no one had before; *Saul* is full of it, and so is one of his most sincerely felt works, the very fine Funeral Ode on the death of Queen Caroline, while all over the operas we see experimental devices, always interesting, and often highly successful. But when all is said and done, Handel has still to suffer, more than any one else in the whole history of art or literature, the penalties that attach to the man who produces a hundred times too much.

A paragraph may be added on the question of Handel's well-known plagiarisms.<sup>2</sup> During the last hundred years or so evidence has been accumulating to show that, besides borrowing very largely from himself, he appropriated from

<sup>1</sup> We must remember that Beethoven, in all probability, knew nothing of Bach but some instrumental works, and extremely little (so far as we can surmise) of the great pre-eighteenth-century composers.

<sup>2</sup> For the material evidence see *The indebtedness of Handel to works by other composers* (Sedley Taylor), with complete examples in musical notation.



many other contemporary or earlier composers, both small and great, laying them under contributions of all kinds, ranging from mere single phrases up to virtually complete long movements. Famous composers like Carissimi, Stradella, Lotti, Graun, and Keiser were so utilized, as well as a host of others of less fame, such as Clari, Muffat, Habermann, Kerl, Urio, Erba; *Israel in Egypt*, in particular, owes an enormous amount to non-Handelian sources, the chorus 'Egypt was glad when they departed' being copied wellnigh note for note from an organ canzona by Kerl,<sup>1</sup> and 'He is my God', 'Thou sentest forth', and 'The earth swallowed them' similarly nearly exactly from a Magnificat of Dionigi Erba—a work laid under plenty of contributions of a rather less wholesale character for many other parts of the oratorio, which also shows over and over again the clearest traces of a Serenata by Stradella and a Te Deum by Francesco Urio. Research has proved up to the very hilt the priority and the non-Handelian authorship of all these works; and we are left with the task of accounting for what, on the face of it, looks suspiciously like flagrant dishonesty. Now that the anti-Handelian fashion is on us, it is the general custom to return a verdict of guilty without extenuating circumstances; but that is really going rather too far. Very many composers—Palestrina, Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, and numbers of others of less fame—have frequently taken fragments of alien material as 'texts' for their own discourses, or as, so to speak, interesting quotations; they very rarely, it is true, specify them as borrowed—a highly reprehensible habit which has caused immense confusion—but in most cases their first hearers probably recognized them easily enough,<sup>2</sup> and, anyhow, they are only mere fragments and nothing more. Handel adopted the same method, but with two exceedingly vital differences. Often he borrows, not mere themes, but great slices of a movement, and sometimes the whole of one;

<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough, Hawkins published this canzona (originally printed in 1686) in his history as an example of Kerl's style without ever recognizing its Handelian interest.

<sup>2</sup> Just as, to take two out of the many literary parallels, Virgil and Tennyson no doubt assumed that their readers would recognize the word-for-word translations from Theocritus and Homer.

perhaps he will change here and there in various ways, perhaps not at all. And further—with the one exception of the beautiful Stradella phrase in ‘He led them forth like sheep’—what he does borrow has little of the salience and point which alone can justify the proceeding; nearly everything that he lays under contribution is as dull stuff as can be, and, unless they had a sense of style keen enough to detect the differences of technique, which to us now are sometimes quite plain,<sup>1</sup> his audiences probably never suspected anything. He certainly was in the habit of working in a terrible hurry, and yet his borrowings cannot have been altogether due to laziness; his manuscript books in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge show that he took great pains to lay up a sort of store of things from which to copy, and, when he does alter and improve, he goes about the business in the spirit of a very careful and conscientious teacher of composition. And there is not the least reason whatever to suppose that he saw anything to be ashamed of in the proceeding; we must not forget the extraordinary prevalence in his day of pasticcios of every conceivable kind, made up out of the works sometimes of a single composer, sometimes of several (whose names were frequently unspecified) all mixed up together—it was considered interesting and important to advertise works as ‘new and original’, and no one troubled very much, if at all, about such a thing as artistic homogeneity.<sup>2</sup> Handel displayed, we must regretfully confess, a greediness of an altogether unique and most deplorable character, and psychologically his proceedings are very puzzling; but both his friends and his enemies have made rather too much of a moral question of the matter.

<sup>1</sup> For example, the bad and quite un-Handelian choral writing of ‘He is my God’ in *Israel*.

<sup>2</sup> The case of Bononcini’s forced retirement from England, though continually quoted, is not really parallel. He was charged with formally claiming as his own composition a madrigal presented (through the medium of Greene) to the Academy of Ancient Music, which was really the work of Lotti; this was obviously deliberate deceit, which no one would have thought of justifying by talking about pasticcios. But it is most doubtful if he was guilty; apart from the evidence in his favour mentioned by the unsympathetic Hawkins, it seems impossible that a man of his great talents and his high position could have been such a shortsighted fool. He never opened his lips in his defence; but that fact is capable of two interpretations, and Lotti himself was of the opinion that the letter on which the Academy relied was a forgery.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CONTEMPORARIES OF HANDEL

CROFT, Greene, Boyce, and Arne—the first a little older, the other three a little younger than Handel—are the four most prominent composers to be dealt with in this chapter; but there are several others besides, to whose biographies a few words are due.

William Croft—or Crofts, as his name was also written—was born probably in 1678; he was a chorister at the Chapel Royal, and a pupil of Blow, whom, in 1708, he succeeded in the posts of organist of Westminster Abbey and ‘Master of the Children’ and composer to the Chapel Royal, of which he had previously been appointed organist—at first jointly with Clarke, and after his death in sole charge. He published many songs, besides instrumental music, overtures and entractes for stage plays, and odes for occasions of public rejoicing; but his fame is derived almost entirely from his music for the services of the church. Most of his finest works are contained in a collection he issued in 1724 under the title of Musica Sacra—the earliest example of ecclesiastical music engraved in score on plates; three years after its publication he died at Bath, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The preface to Musica Sacra shows a very attractive character; it is a modest and thoughtful expression of his ideas on church music, and the quiet heartfelt homage to Purcell shows a self-effacing generosity of spirit not too common with musicians of Croft’s age—indeed, contrasted with the ordinary preface of either the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, it reads, to an extent almost unique, like the work of an artist and a gentleman.

Maurice Greene, the other great anthem-writer of the period, was seventeen years Croft’s junior, being born in 1695. In his boyhood a chorister of St. Paul’s Cathedral, he

was at the age of twenty-two elected its organist; and he subsequently combined this position, after the pluralist fashion of the times, with those of organist and composer to the Chapel Royal (in succession to Croft), University Professor of Music at Cambridge, and 'Master of the King's Musick'. In 1750 he inherited from a cousin a country estate in Essex, and, though still holding all his former offices, spent, it would appear, most of his time in collecting material for the publication in score of a representative selection of English church music—a project that was interrupted by his death in 1755, but was subsequently carried out by his pupil Boyce, to whom the task was bequeathed. In the earlier part of his life he was an intimate friend of Handel, who used frequently to play the organ at St. Paul's; but he declined to take sides in the operatic rivalry between Handel and Bononcini until the irascibility of the former threw him, apparently against his will, into the ranks of the latter's vehement partisans. Greene's chief publication was issued in 1743, and was entitled *Forty Select Anthems*; but he also brought out various other music, both vocal and instrumental. Very much of his work remains, however, still in manuscript; there are numerous odes for various festal occasions, an oratorio on the subject of Jephtha, dramatic compositions, &c., &c.

William Boyce was born in 1710; and like Greene, whose pupil he was, began his musical career as a chorister at St. Paul's. For many years he held the post of composer to the Chapel Royal, for some time simultaneously with Greene, whom he succeeded in 1755 in the Mastership of the King's Musick; he was also conductor of the Three Choirs Festivals at Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford, and held various organ appointments at London churches, though owing to the increase of the deafness from which he suffered for the greater part of his life, he gave up most of his work some time before his death in 1779. He wrote a large quantity of vocal and instrumental music, both secular and ecclesiastical; but his name is best known by his fine collection of Cathedral music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the original idea of which was, as we have seen, due to Greene. Though it is to be regretted that he did not make more exhaustive



researches among the earlier composers, and, indeed, did not always select the finest examples of those of later date, yet the three large folio volumes remain a very worthy monument, and undoubtedly did very much to spread the fame of the masterpieces of Gibbons and Purcell and many more. Boyce was, however, not an ideal editor, and he has given considerable trouble to subsequent researchers; but his sins in these matters probably disturbed no one in his own time or, indeed, for long afterwards.

The name of Thomas Augustine Arne is at present by far the best known among the English-born composers of the time, of whom, indeed, he was the most popular among his contemporaries. He was born in 1710, and was at first designed for the legal profession; unlike Croft, Greene, and Boyce, he seems to have written nothing for the church, though he produced a couple of oratorios on the subjects of *Abel* and *Judith*.<sup>1</sup> He confined himself almost entirely to music connected with the stage or with popular places of entertainment like Vauxhall and Ranelagh, and composed an immense mass of work of this kind; his incidental music to adaptations of *Milton's Comus* (1738), *Shakespeare's As You Like it* (1740), and *The Tempest* (1746) contains some of his most familiar songs, while the elaborate opera *Artaxerxes* (1762) shows him in his most ambitious mood. Arne, who died in 1778, seems to have had his musical character a good deal spoilt by the success which he achieved directly his talents were allowed full scope; his correspondence generally shows him in the light of the 'jealous and self-seeking tradesman'<sup>2</sup> rather than the artist, and when desirous of obtaining a commission to write fresh music for a revival of Dryden's *King Arthur* in 1770, he can, in a letter to Garrick, refer to Purcell's original settings of the songs as 'infamously bad—so very bad that they are privately the objects of sneer and ridicule to the musicians'. 'I wish you

<sup>1</sup> At a performance of this work in 1773 (it was originally produced in 1761) female voices were for the first time in England introduced into oratorio choruses, the upper parts of which had always previously been sung by boys.

<sup>2</sup> See an article on 'Arne and his songs', by G. E. P. Arkwright, in the *Musical Gazette* for December, 1902.

would give me leave to doctor this performance ; I would certainly make it pleasing to the public', he adds ; and sentiments like these came with unpleasant frequency from his pushing pen.

A few short biographical notes may now be given concerning the other more or less noteworthy composers of the time.

The date of John Weldon's birth is 1676 ; he was apparently a pupil of Purcell, and held organ appointments at New College, Oxford, and from 1708 (on Blow's death) at the Chapel Royal, of which he was afterwards—from 1715 till his death in 1736—one of the court composers. His music is wellnigh exclusively ecclesiastical in character.

Charles Stroud, a pupil of Croft, and organist of Whitehall, who died very young in 1726 ; Charles King (1687–1748), a pupil of Blow and Clarke, and vicar-choral of St. Paul's ; Thomas Kempton, organist of Ely Cathedral from 1729 to 1762 ; James Kent (1700–1776), chorister at the Chapel Royal under Croft, and afterwards organist, from 1731 to 1737, of Trinity College, Cambridge, and from 1737 till 1774 of the Cathedral and College of Winchester ; Thomas Kelway (died 1749), organist of Chichester Cathedral (his younger brother Joseph was, according to Burney, the 'head of the Scarlatti sect' in England) ; William Hayes (1706–1777), organist for over forty years of Magdalen College, Oxford, and University Professor of Music ; John Travers (died 1758), a pupil of Greene, and organist of the Chapel Royal ; James Nares (1715–1783), organist of York Minster, and from 1756 onwards Greene's successor at the Chapel Royal ; all these may be taken in various ways and degrees as typical exponents of the church music of the time below the high level of Croft and Greene and Boyce. Nares and Travers showed some good work in other departments ; but most of the rest—except Hayes, who was more versatile, and set Collins' Ode to the Passions and a *Masque of Circe*—confined themselves chiefly to producing material for their church duties.

Among the primarily instrumental composers the names of William Babell (1690–1723), Charles John Stanley (1713–1786), and Joseph Gibbs (1699–1788) may be mentioned as



typical; but some of the better-known men, especially Boyce and Arne, wrote a good deal for harpsichord and for strings. John Christopher Pepusch (1667–1752), though a Prussian by birth, resided in England for the last fifty years of his life; he preceded Handel as organist to the Duke of Chandos, and was subsequently music-director at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and organist of the Charterhouse. He wrote a large quantity of instrumental music, besides odes, masques, and motets, and some elaborate theoretical treatises; but his best-known work was the selection and adaptation of the tunes for *The Beggar's Opera*—the brightest and most popular example of the ballad opera in England.

Mention has been made in the previous chapter of the blow dealt to Handel's operatic schemes by the success of this work, first performed in January, 1728, and still a favourite fifty years later; the music consisted merely of a string of entirely disconnected folk-songs and other popular melodies of the time ('wild, rude, and often vulgar', the fashionable Burney calls them), adapted to Gay's words, and harmonized by Pepusch, who also supplied an overture based on one of the folk-tunes. Other 'ballad operas', as they were called,<sup>1</sup> soon sprang up to emulate its enormous success; four more appeared in 1728, and seven in 1729. They came, in their original form, to an end with *Galligantus* (1758), the last in which there is no original music at all; but as we shall subsequently see, they left their influence on later English opera, which for a long time combined the composer's own work with selections from the temporarily favourite songs of both native and foreign birth. The Italian opera, however, though discarded by Handel himself, continued to exist simultaneously with more or less success; and some of the chief contemporary English composers, such as Boyce and Arne, brought out operas in which the dialogues were (as in Clayton's *Rosamond* of 1707) set to music 'after the Italian fashion', and not spoken, as was, and remained for a long time after, the

<sup>1</sup> *The Beggar's Opera* does its best to justify its form by the dramatic fiction that it was originally intended for the wedding ceremonies of a beggar and a ballad-singer; but, later on, no one troubled to express any sort of apology.

general practice of English opera, which in that respect conformed to the French and German methods. It is easy to see the reason for the popularity of the ballad operas in the contrast they presented to the stilted and artificial proceedings of the Italian stage, which even the genius of Handel could not succeed in making tolerable, except to a fashionable coterie; and besides their democratic appeal to the ordinary man, the individual tunes themselves are often of very great artistic merit, and, anyhow, were free from the irritating roulades and posturings which were the breath of life to the singers of the opposition form of entertainment.<sup>1</sup> The patrons of *The Beggar's Opera*, for example, heard, in addition to admirable folk-tunes, native and foreign, some of Purcell's most beautiful songs (though it is true that 'Britons, strike home' is reduced to only six bars—this violent truncation is not uncommon), and extracts from Handel himself; and it is not surprising that the ordinary unaristocratic music-lover preferred such an entertainment to the rival stage performances—even though it was liable to the censure of stern moralists like Burke, who could not endure to hear any praise of a production so subversive in social tendency,<sup>2</sup> or Johnson, who pronounced that there was in it 'such a labe-factation of all principles as might be injurious to morality'—a verdict which much annoyed the more tolerant Boswell.

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the foundation of several still existing musical institutions of different kinds. The 'Three Choirs Festivals' of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford were started at Gloucester in 1724, and have been held at each city triennially ever since; it was some forty years before Birmingham copied the example, and there (and at other places subsequently) the festivals were of less regular occurrence than they have always been in the western cathedral cities. The Royal Society of Musicians was founded in 1738, and was warmly supported by Handel, Arne, Boyce, and others; it still survives as a charitable institution for

<sup>1</sup> Later on, however, it seems that singers frequently ornamented the simple tunes with their own 'airs and graces': sometimes these were definitely printed—there is a typical elaborate example in Shield's *Rosina*.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Burke* (p. 111).



aged and indigent musicians and their families.<sup>1</sup> Three years later the now somewhat unobtrusive 'Madrigal Society'<sup>1741</sup> was inaugurated by John Immyns, secretary to Pepusch; Hawkins gives a very charming account of the meetings, which were attended by men of all classes and callings, united in their appreciation of the older style of music, and 'not less distinguished by their love of vocal harmony than by the harmless simplicity of their tempers, and by their friendly disposition towards each other'.

Another institution, that became extinct at the close of the century, but had great influence while it lasted, was the 'Academy of Ancient Music', which seems, though the evidence is not very clear, to have begun its meetings early in 1726; numbers of motets and madrigals of nearly all the great sixteenth-century masters, both English and foreign, were in the regular repertory, which also included works by later and contemporary composers. Almost all the prominent musicians resident in England were members; and the concerts must have been of great value in keeping alive the taste for a style so unlike that generally practised at the time. Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the connexion of the Academy with Bononcini's retirement from England—the one fact in its history which has kept its name familiar to the general reader.

We cannot help noticing, all through this period, a great extension of the artistic evils, the beginning of which we have already seen in Purcell's day. Composers were all too rapidly adopting the idea that they were the servants of a public that had to be pleased on the spot; Burney's complaint that John Sebastian Bach did not 'extend his fame by simplifying his style more to the level of his judges' and by 'writing in a style more popular and generally intelligible and pleasing' exactly voices the contemporary English attitude towards music, which demanded at all costs that it should not be bored. To this were due all the pasticcios of favourite tunes,

<sup>1</sup> Two other British institutions also use in their titles the word 'musicians' without qualification. The Musicians' Company is the modern development of a Fraternity of Minstrels chartered by Edward IV, and again in 1604 by James I; the Incorporated Society of Musicians is a chiefly debating and examining body, founded in 1882.

all the interpolations of organ or vocal solos between the parts of oratorios, all the ornamental alterations with which one singer tried to secure more applause than his or her rivals;<sup>1</sup> sometimes the matter was put very frankly indeed, as in a delightful advertisement from a Dublin paper of 1742<sup>2</sup> announcing a performance of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* and *Zadok the Priest*, with 'songs by Mrs. Arne, accompanied on the violin by Mr. Arne, who will introduce Comic Interludes, intended to give relief to that grave attention necessary to be kept up in serious performances'. Mattheson, in his *Ehrenpforte*, remarks with surprise that 'many concerts are given for money' in England; when things like those quoted above resulted from the decline of private patronage, it was difficult for thinking men not to regret modern democratic customs. Some there were in England, no doubt, who felt that there was something wrong; Hawkins' preface to the second edition of Boyce's 'Cathedral Music' expresses his views with considerable incisiveness and eloquence, and though he wrote in 1788, outside the period we are now considering, his remarks apply with full force to the earlier time. His descriptions of the composers who 'like most of that profession who are to live by the favour of the public, have two styles of composition, the one for their own private delight, the other for the gratification of the many', are singularly pointed; unfortunately, he, like wellnigh all his contemporaries, always failed to see to how very large an extent Handel himself was responsible for the decline in artistic ideals.

A considerable number of books on musical subjects were published during this period. Essays on aesthetics, in particular, were numerous; perhaps the most interesting is the *Essay on Musical Expression* by Charles Avison (c. 1710-1770), which is full of good sense, set out in pleasant style; it was controverted, somewhat ponderously, by William Hayes. Notice should also be made of the valuable *Art of Playing*

<sup>1</sup> Apparently, however, instrumentalists were, as a general rule, expected, in Italy as well as in England, to keep rather closer to the notes before them. Singers were spoilt children.

<sup>2</sup> Grattan Flood, *History of Irish Music*, p. 283.



*the Violin* (the first treatise ever printed on the subject), the work of Francesco Geminiani (1680–1762), a distinguished violinist who was settled in London or Dublin nearly all his later life.

We have now to consider the musical output of the English-born composers of this period ; and turning, as before, firstly to ecclesiastical music (to which, indeed, most of them devoted their primary energies), we find that among the oldest, and perhaps also, on the whole, the most noteworthy of all, is Croft. We have already seen something of the man's attractive character in his preface to his *Musica Sacra* ; and this attitude of modest dignity is reflected in his work. He is best known now by his fine hymn-tunes, 'St. Anne,' 'St. Matthew,' and 'Hanover'<sup>1</sup>—noteworthy as among the earliest purely English hymn-tunes entirely untouched by Genevan or other outside influences ;<sup>2</sup> indeed, the great massive swing of the triple measure of 'Hanover' was possibly quite a novelty at the time for such music, and it certainly possesses a distinct character of its own. But these, admirable in all ways as they are, represent only one, and that the less important side of Croft's church music ; while it is true that some of his anthems fall short of them in qualities of solidity and masterly directness of style, yet his best works show features which demand for their portrayal much more space than a hymn-tune can afford. Like some of the younger anthem-writers of the time, he not infrequently hovers visibly between his allegiance to the older and stronger ideals and his desire to meet the insistent contemporary demands for elegance and grace ; occasionally he spoils what would otherwise be very fine works by unfortunate reminiscences of the perfunctory concluding Hallelujahs of the earlier generation, as in 'Praise the Lord, O my soul', or by bald strings of consecutive thirds and sixths, as in 'God is gone up with a merry noise' or

<sup>1</sup> The first and last have been attributed to others, but probably without justification. It is true that versions of 'St. Anne' exist which are ascribed to one Denby, otherwise unknown ; but Croft's contemporaries, Hart and Church, distinctly acknowledged his authorship, and probably Denby was merely an arranger. (See the article in Grove's Dictionary on 'Saint Anne's Tune'.) 'Hanover' has been ascribed to Handel, but on no trustworthy evidence.

<sup>2</sup> The first phrase of 'St. Anne' is of course common property enough, and may be found in early Gregorian music ; but that counts for little.

'Give the King thy judgements'. On the whole, he seems least at home when attempting what we might call 'brilliant' anthems. In 'The heavens declare the glory of God', for example, in spite of the broad and dignified character of one of its 'Hallelujah' sections, there is a great deal of purely conventional bustling around; and his orchestrally accompanied anthems, especially those written for festive occasions, such as 'Rejoice in the Lord' or 'O give thanks', are usually, in spite of their largeness of outline, disfigured by a quantity of what are nothing but massively reiterated 'tags'. But at his best—and in most of his works he is, even if not continuously, in his really good vein somewhere—he is a very attractive composer, with a real sense for lofty dignity of phrase, and a distinct individuality of his own. The music of his Burial Service cannot rank with that of either Morley or Purcell; but it is sincere and impressive, and its sentiment, if not altogether great, is thoroughly manly. Sometimes, as in 'O Lord, rebuke me not'—

No. 88.

[*Slow and majestic*]

IV. V. VI. I. II. III. IV. V. VI. &c.

O Lord, re-buke me not in thine in-dig-nation, &c.

\* See Chapter xiii.

'O Lord God of my salvation', or 'Hear my prayer, O Lord' (which begins in four parts and gradually increases to eight), the music is finely austere and solid, sometimes approaching



really noble sombreness; and again, in a work like 'O Lord, thou hast searched me out', he can strike a vein of really beautiful and original melody—or, as in 'Be merciful unto me' or 'Put me not to rebuke', can show a manly expressiveness that very worthily fits the words. His emotions are always well under control, as befits the eighteenth-century scholar and gentleman, and he never moves us very much; but in the roll of English church musicians there are very few who are more deserving of our sincere and cordial respect. He was probably the last who felt, more or less habitually, the influence of his great predecessors in that field; and in sober dignity and quietly sincere musicianship he is, when at his best, a true successor to the fine traditions.

Weldon was two years Croft's senior in age, but he outlived him by nine years; and his music certainly owes less to the older models. In many ways he forecasts the rather sentimental attitude of later English composers of religious music, notably, *mutatis mutandis*, Sterndale Bennett; the older notion of the essential value of restraint and dignity has almost if not quite disappeared, and in their place we have a style which is melodious enough in a somewhat weak manner and marked by rather elementary elegance, but is clean and in its way expressive. 'O God, thou hast cast us out,' 'Who can tell how oft he offendeth' (supposed to be in seven parts, but the full passages are of microscopically small duration), 'In thee O Lord have I put my trust', 'Hear my crying', and others like them, are on the whole of rather flimsy texture; they are the work of a man with a good deal of capacity for agreeable sentiment, but little command over solid technique. Perhaps his best work, though it seems wellnigh forgotten now, is a long sort of 'scena' in several movements, entitled 'The Dissolution', which was published in Playford's *Harmonia Sacra*; this is much more Purcellian than Weldon's ordinary anthems, and shows a good deal of rather powerful declamation and some finely swinging rhythms. But most of his work is, compared with that of his best contemporaries, merely second-rate; it is the beginning of a style that has in later days done its best to wreck English church music, though Weldon himself always, as has been said, retained a certain cleanness and refinement.

Greene was some twenty years younger than Croft and Weldon, and belonged entirely to the Handelian period; we find in him occasional traces of the great earlier style, but they are less common than with Croft, though, when the old influence does make itself felt, the results are finer, perhaps, than anything Croft could achieve. Greene undoubtedly was a genius, though the fire of inspiration burnt fitfully; works like 'Sing unto the Lord a new song', 'Arise, shine', 'O clap your hands', 'I will sing of thy power', 'Let my complaint come before thee', 'The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken', 'God is our hope and strength', or the eight-part 'How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord' are really fine music, broad and massive in style, and instinct with individual dignity, in spite—in some of them—of the presence of a certain amount of what may be called Handelian generalities. The Anniversary Commemoration anthem, 'Hearken unto me, ye holy children,' written in 1728 for King's College, Cambridge, is a large work with full orchestral accompaniments, full of musicianly vigour from start to finish; in this field Greene was quite at home, and frequently produced really brilliant effects. But he could also be subtle, and, indeed, two anthems—'Lord let me know mine end' and 'Lord, how long wilt thou be angry'—

No. 89.

*Largo*

Lord how long wilt thou be an . gry, shall thy

jea-lou - sy burn like, burn like, fire for e . ver, &c.

&c.

The musical score is written for voice and basso continuo. It features a treble clef and a bass clef, both in the key of D major (two sharps). The time signature is common time (C). The melody is characterized by wide intervals and a slow, majestic pace. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words split across lines. The score ends with a double bar line and the instruction '&c.'.



may without much hesitation be ranked as the finest masterpieces produced by a native-born Englishman in the whole period we are considering, and indeed as quite worthy to stand side by side with the great anthems of earlier times; both are full, from the first bar to the last, of nobly expressive solemnity—the sombre, never-ceasing, funeral march rhythm of ‘Lord let me know mine end’ is superbly conceived—and the workmanship of both is of a very high type, even if we, perhaps, feel a certain lack of balance about the structure of ‘Lord, how long wilt thou be angry?’ But he was a composer of very unequal powers; and any one who sets himself, in admiration of these special anthems, to read through Greene’s complete sacred compositions, will find very few others that attain anything like this level. His best anthems are nearly all full; but he more usually wrote verse-anthems, which in the majority of cases are marked by a sort of mechanically monotonous style that retains enough musicianship to avoid (as a rule, but not invariably<sup>1</sup>) conventional triviality but not enough to produce anything of living interest. Our impression of Greene is indeed that of a man who, somehow, neglected and more or less frittered away a very splendid talent; for natural genius, his name certainly ranks among the foremost few in the list of English musicians of the last two centuries.

Boyce was, as we have seen, selected by Greene as his musical legatee; but as a composer he is a much smaller man. The five-part anthem, ‘O where shall wisdom be found’ and the four-part ‘By the waters of Babylon’ represent his church music at its best: they are solid, dignified work, thoroughly sincere and clean, but not very specially worthy of remembrance. His large eight-part ‘O give thanks’<sup>2</sup> is also in some respects not at all unattractive, and the fashionable consecutive thirds and sixths are here managed considerably more satisfactorily than usual; ‘Give the King thy judgements,’ the five-part ‘Turn thee unto me’, ‘Save me, O God’, and others, have plenty of solid merit in their way, and the end of ‘If we believe that

<sup>1</sup> For example, the miserably perfunctory accompaniment-figures in ‘O praise the Lord of heaven’, or the empty twirlings of ‘Behold, I bring you glad tidings’.

<sup>2</sup> In B flat; not to be confused with a four-part anthem in the key of C with the same title.

'Jesus died' is fine and tender. There is much that we can temperately admire; but the expression is, as a rule, somewhat formal and stilted, and altogether a course of Boyce's music leaves us with the confused and somewhat somnolent recollection of many very conscientious but rather dull pages. His workmanship is, as a rule, within its narrow limits, very accurate and adequate; but occasionally it breaks down altogether. One of the most curious of all anthems is Boyce's eight-part 'Blessing and glory', forty-eight bars altogether, arranged in four little sections, (a) twelve bars of what is called eight-part work, but is never anything like it, (b) twelve bars of a four-part Hallelujah<sup>1</sup> on a jumping dotted rhythm, (c) twelve bars of a four-part 'Verse', and (d) repeated to finish: it is true, however, that Boyce very rarely drops to elementary emptiness of this kind—on the whole he is an eminently respectable composer, whose solid good-natured face, looking out at us underneath the carefully arranged wig, is exactly typical of his music.

The rest of the church music of the period does not come to much. The least negligible of the remaining men is no doubt William Hayes, most of whose services and anthems—'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem' is probably the best—are the work of a solid if as a rule rather uninspired and uninspiring musician, free from meretriciousness and, when allowance is made for the elegant posturings which his patrons demanded, not unattractive; we can read or hear his music with a certain satisfaction, and with him the conscious graces of the time rarely degenerate into flimsiness. It is true that he shows a partiality for one of the most unfortunate features of the anthems of the Restoration period—the incongruous bustling 'Hallelujah' finales: perhaps the worst case is in 'O give thanks', where each voice repeats the word some twenty times on end without pausing to take breath. But as a rule William Hayes' music is very tolerable, if we do not have too much of it at once. His lesser contemporaries, though

<sup>1</sup> Boyce has not so many perfunctory 'Hallelujah sections' as most of his contemporaries; but, on the other hand, he sometimes (as in 'Lord, what is man') interjects the word explosively at intervals—which is no artistic improvement.



their music still to some extent survives, come to little or nothing; Stroud's 'Hear my prayer' has some agreeably melodious pages, and is clean and nice enough in its rather ordinary way. Kempton is a distinctly worthy if unimaginative composer, and Travers' 'Ascribe unto the Lord', in spite of the conscious elegance of its opening tenor solo and a good deal of rather meaningless floridity, is on the whole vigorous pleasant music, but Kelway and King and Nares and Kent have extremely little to say to justify their existence. We can, however, no doubt distinguish to some extent between them; Kelway and King, in spite of their extreme dullness, are, as a rule, free from the flimsiness which marks very much of the sacred work<sup>1</sup> of Nares and still more that of the formerly much overrated Kent—one of the poorest, though one of the most popular, composers of the time.

Indeed, Hawkins' epigrammatic judgement on King's works —'no one cares to censure or commend them, and they leave the mind just as they found it'—applies to very much of the church music of this period. Apart from the best works of Croft and Greene, these stacks of services and anthems contain hardly any music that would be worth remembering for a quarter of an hour were there not such a dearth of anything better. Boyce and Weldon and Hayes have their points, like any second-rate man who has capacity enough to make some use of good training; and Boyce once or twice showed something of his own. But nearly all this music has retained whatever vitality it still possesses solely through the associations of the daily routine of churches and cathedrals. Croft and Greene are the only composers who can really stand upright and look the world of art in the face: and fine as are their best things, the bulk of even their work will not bear comparison with that of Blow in the earlier generation, not to mention Purcell.

But besides religious music for the church, we have also to consider that intended for the concert-room; most of it, in default of the artificial support just mentioned, has now vanished into obscurity, but it is certainly not in any way

<sup>1</sup> See, however, p. 228 for Nares' instrumental music.

of different merit. However, in the period we are now regarding, oratorios were not so very common; the fashion started by Handel took some little time to spread, and it is not till the next generation that we find the oratorio-fever in full career. A fair number, indeed, of works of the kind were produced by Handel's contemporaries; but, with one exception, they do not seem to demand detailed notice from the artistic standpoint. The influences from the great men of the past which inspired Greene to such works as 'Lord, how long wilt thou be angry' did not operate with respect to a perfectly new art-form, that from its origin was a theatrical entertainment: the men who had always associated religious words with the organ-loft moved at first uneasily and tentatively when required to transport their sentiments to the concert-room. Handel's oratorios no doubt succeeded all the more from the fact that he approached them from the opera-house and not from the cathedral: and similarly the best oratorio-music of the period by a native-born Englishman was the work of one who never wrote a service or an anthem in his life.

The oratorios of Arne are indeed altogether operatic in style, and owe nothing whatever to any ecclesiastical influences. The earlier of the two, *Abel*, which was produced in the same year as Handel's *Belshazzar*, has survived down to our own days in the charmingly melodious 'Morning Hymn of Eve'; but, though none of it is now as well known, his second oratorio *Judith* is more important, even though we can hardly echo the enthusiastic appreciation that a former owner of the British Museum copy has inscribed on the title-page—'one of the most noble compositions that ever stampt fame on a musician.' The printed score contains only solos and duets besides the overture, with no hint of choruses anywhere: no doubt, however, the fact that the title-page says 'as it is perform'd at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane', while the table of contents is called 'a Table of the Songs in the Oratorio call'd Judith', implies that choruses had been written and occasionally performed. Certainly the libretto as it stands in the score is absolutely vague and unintelligible, and might apparently apply to anything or anybody as well



as to Judith; though it is difficult to imagine how any choral elucidations of the narrative could adequately justify the various things in it. None of the music is in the faintest degree large in style, and the duet for two sopranos 'Oh thou on whom the weak depend' is hopelessly feeble and conventional: but still there is a great deal of very melodious tunefulness of a very pleasant kind, such as 'Adorn'd with ev'ry matchless grace' or 'Vain is beauty's gaudy flow'r', or several other airs. Once, in 'Sleep gentle cherub',<sup>1</sup> Arne manages to produce a little piece of somewhat remarkable delicacy and beauty; and he can also write vigorously effective music like the bass airs 'Hail immortal Bacchus' and 'Conquest is not to bestow', in the latter of which the voice is almost always in unison with the whole string band, the upper harmony being supplied by two oboes and two horns. The whole work is, in spite of a fair amount of the ordinary decorous nothings of the age, very agreeable in its light style: and 'Sleep gentle cherub' should be far better known than it is.

The secular vocal work of Arne is at the present time (at any rate in selections) much the most familiar music of the period, apart from that of Handel himself; and, indeed, there is much reason for its survival. We need not, perhaps, dwell on 'Rule Britannia' (an extract from *Alfred*); it is only patriotism that has gathered this comparatively undistinguished strain out of its forgotten context—though it is true that the modern version is garbled in notes, in words, and in the way the two are fitted together. But, unequal composer though he was, Arne at his best possessed an individual vein of melody which, if not for a moment comparable with that of Purcell, is, nevertheless, genuine and pure; it is true that its range is not wide, and its emotion not deep, but still it lives and breathes, even after a hundred and fifty years have elapsed. Some of his Shakespearean songs, such as 'Where the bee sucks', 'Under the greenwood tree', or 'Blow, blow, thou winter wind', show, slender though they are, real marked freshness of style; and some less-known songs are perhaps still better. We have already remarked

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Arkwright's 'Old English Edition'.

the grace of the best songs in the oratorios; and in the same style (Arne's methods hardly ever vary, whether he is dealing with oratorio or the stage or neither one nor the other) we may notice 'Not on beds of fading flowers' from *Comus*, or 'Arise, sweet messenger of morn' from *Alfred*—both of a singularly charming delicacy—or 'O come, O come, my dearest' from *The Fall of Phaeton*—a sparkling polished little gem in its way—

No. 90.

*Andante (quasi allegretto)*

O come, O come my dear-est, and hith - er bring Thy

lips a - dorn'd . . . with all the bloom-ing spring, &c.

As a rule, Arne's talent shows itself at its best in dainty tunefulness; he could very rarely rise to anything more powerful, but there are occasional, though very few, exceptions, such as the song from *Alfred*, 'Vengeance, O come inspire me'—a brilliantly vigorous *Prestissimo* that really stirs the blood. But after all, Arne, it must be confessed, cannot long remain at such a level as he reached in work such as has just been named; he very easily dropped to an average sort of style, melodious enough in its way, but complacently undistinguished, and quite easily forgettable. *Artaxerxes*, the opera which was supposed by contemporary criticism to be his masterpiece, is, to the reader who approaches it with a decided, if tempered, enthusiasm for Arne's talents, a very great dis-



appointment. The great bulk of it is ordinary decorously stilted work (such as is seen, indeed, from start to finish of two other popular productions of his, the music to *Elfrida* and to *The Fairy Prince*); on the whole, he seems to have aimed at a certain impressiveness, and in the result to have produced a mass of conventional formulae. Occasionally, no doubt, we come across things of worth; the Siciliana movement in the tenor scena, 'O much loved son', has a good deal of expressiveness, and the soprano air, 'Let not rage, thy bosom firing', and the familiar 'Water parted from the sea' display Arne's pleasant melodiousness very agreeably. But both here and elsewhere Arne practically failed altogether when attempting anything on a large scale; when he tries to be floridly grand he almost invariably falls into purely second-rate and empty Handelianism (the ambitious but very poor song, 'The soldier tired of war's alarms', is a typical instance). Arne, indeed, is a somewhat small man possessed of one special talent, by which alone he lives; but this one gift of pleasant fresh tunefulness has certainly never been at all too common, and though he cannot rank with the really great English composers, yet he occupies a very worthy niche of his own in our temple of art.

Greene's secular vocal music is far less familiar than Arne's; but much of it is of quite excellent quality. Songs like 'Go, rose'—dainty and elegant, if a shade stilted—he wrote in quantities; but we see this side of him to most advantage in such works as his setting of Pope's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and (especially) in the dramatic Pastoral entitled *Phoebe*<sup>1</sup>. The former shows but a slight amount of the conventionality so usual in festival odes of the period; its final chorus 'Thus song could prevail' is very breezy and pointed, and the Siciliana duet 'By the streams that ever flow' is full of delicate grace. *Phoebe* is a charming work that well deserves the attention of a tardy publisher; some pages, indeed (such as the last chorus), do not amount to much, but the *allegro e piano* chorus 'From piercing steel or whelming wave', with its striking setting of 'and melt thy anger with her tears', is of a distinctly uncommon kind, and the solo numbers

<sup>1</sup> The MSS. are in the Bodleian Library, with many others by Greene.

are full of most pleasant music. Tunes like 'Phoebe fears each bird that flies' or 'Ah, could we love like him' or the duet 'As round thine arm this chain I tie' show eighteenth-century melody in its most agreeable forms; and the vigorous bass air 'Like the young god of wine' displays some real characterization. It is true that Greene's secular work is, like his ecclesiastical, unequal; but at its best it shows, as much as the finest of the anthems do, talent of a quite exceptional kind.

A few words may be given to some other contemporary secular works. Croft's *Musicus apparatus academicus*—consisting of two odes, one in Latin and one in English, written for his doctor's degree at Oxford—is a good specimen of his straightforward talent; it is not so individual as many of his anthems, but the English ode, 'With noise of cannons and of rattling drums', is not without a good deal of Purcellian spirit and directness, and has plenty of solid merit. Again, his song 'My time, O ye Muses, was happily spent' is very charming, almost worthy of Purcell himself; in lyrical work Croft's touch is, indeed, not infrequently unusually light, and he has plenty of distinction of utterance. Some of Boyce's music to stage plays has vigour and tunefulness, and his 'Heart of oak' (from *The Harlequin's Invasion*) is a fine melody, which well deserves its continued fame; in this field he was extremely prolific, and shoals of songs, often excellent of their kind, but lacking, as a rule, the finish of the best of Arne or Greene or Croft, are to be met with in the collections of the time. Finally, passing mention may be made of 'God save the King', which seems fairly certainly (though the matter cannot be said to be settled) the composition of one Henry Carey (died 1743), a half-amateurish musician and poet (whose excellent tune to his own poem of 'Sally in our alley' has now been ousted by an Elizabethan melody); it is by a series of accidents that it has become the national anthem of both England and Germany, but after all it is one of the best of its rather undistinguished tribe.

We have already observed the curious lack of anything like distinctiveness in the great bulk of Handel's instrumental music; and the similar work of his contemporaries shows similar qualities or absence of qualities. Arne, Boyce, Greene,



and the rest of the foremost men did indeed produce a considerable amount of instrumental work, both solo and concerted; but nearly all of it is singularly stereotyped. The same turns of phrase, the same harmonic progressions, recur over and over again; and of melodic or any other inventiveness there is hardly a trace. Yet it is all, or nearly all, very worthy work; only very rarely do we see any of that sort of careless vulgarity which was creeping into the inferior class of instrumental music on the continent,<sup>1</sup> and the vast majority of all these sonatas and concertos and lessons are marked by dignified solidness and sober geniality. But even excellent qualities like these do not serve to dispel the dullness that is caused by the absence of any living inspiration; and undoubtedly, on the whole, a composer of the time based his claims much more on his vocal than on his instrumental productions. Still, there are some exceptions here and there that strike the eye, and afford a few pages worthy of our remembrance; among the best of these is a really charming harpsichord lesson in three movements by Nares<sup>2</sup> (whose anthems, as we have seen, are by no means among the best), which is marked by unusual freshness of both style and matter and a facility of expression surprising in so ordinarily second-rate a composer. On the whole, the violin music is of considerably better calibre than that for keyed instruments; some of Boyce's sonatas for two violins and bass are as good work as exists of the period, and some of Arne's dance-movements for violin show qualities quite absent from his exceedingly tedious organ concertos and harpsichord suites. Occasionally, less-known composers, like William Babell and Joseph Gibbs, produced pieces of considerable grace and spirit; there is a charming violin sonata in B flat by the former, and a 'Corno' from a sonata in E flat (for the same instrument) by the latter is unusually pointed and individual. But the exceptions are but few; and, on the whole, there are few duller tracts in musical literature than that of eighteenth-century English instrumental work.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the really thoroughly bad overture to Porpora's oratorio *Santa Eugenia* (1723), the autograph of which is in the British Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in the fourth volume of the *Oxford History of Music*.

## CHAPTER IX

### MUSIC UNDER THE LATER GEORGES

ONE of the oldest composers whose works will come under review in the present chapter is Benjamin Cooke (1734–1793); he was for many years organist of Westminster Abbey, and composed a large quantity of music of all kinds, of which the glees are considerably the most noteworthy. Slightly junior was Jonathan Battishill (1738–1801); in his earlier life he devoted himself chiefly to theatre music and songs, but afterwards turned more in the direction of anthems and other works intended for church use. When a youth he had acted as Boyce's deputy in the organist's duties at the Chapel Royal, and his admiration for the elder composer lasted throughout his life, and inspired his dying wish to be buried close at hand in St. Paul's Cathedral; he composed very little during the last twenty-five years of his life,<sup>1</sup> when he seems to have spent much of his time in book-collecting, and at no period was he nearly so prolific as the majority of his contemporaries. Samuel Arnold (1740–1802), for example, produced forty-nine dramatic works, five oratorios—the most famous being *The Prodigal Son*—and very many anthems and services and instrumental pieces both for orchestra and for harpsichord, besides collecting a large quantity of English ecclesiastical music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which was issued as a sort of continuation of Boyce's 'Cathedral Music', and performing multifarious duties as editor and conductor and organist of the Chapel Royal and subsequently of Westminster Abbey. Arnold was indeed, however superficially, one of the most versatile and indefatigable musicians of the time; and most of the rather younger composers who concerned themselves at all with ecclesiastical music devoted themselves to it more exclusively, with the exception of

<sup>1</sup> Grief at the death of his wife in 1777 is said to have been the cause.



Thomas Attwood (1765–1838), who, like Battishill, wrote primarily in early life for the stage, and later on for the church, while producing songs and glees and instrumental pieces more or less continually all through his career. Originally a chorister at the Chapel Royal, he subsequently studied at Naples and then at Vienna under Mozart, who expressed high opinions of him ; he was organist of St. Paul's Cathedral for thirty years, and held also various court appointments. In his last years he was an intimate friend of Mendelssohn, whose genius he was one of the first Englishmen to recognize ; he was also one of the founders of the Philharmonic Society, and one of the first professors of the Royal Academy of Music.

Two composers of the period, chiefly known by their ecclesiastical music, are John Clarke-Whitfield (1770–1836) and William Crotch (1775–1847). The former was successively organist of Armagh Cathedral, Trinity and St. John's Colleges, Cambridge, and Hereford Cathedral, besides being from 1821 onwards University Professor at Cambridge ; the latter was chiefly connected with the sister university, where he was for fifty years Professor, besides holding organ appointments at Christ Church and St. John's College. Crotch was perhaps the most juvenile infant prodigy ever known, as he was an organ-player at the age of two, was the subject of philosophical papers at the Royal Society at three, and at four gave a course of daily public recitals in London. His chief works were the oratorios *Palestine* and *The Captivity of Judah* and a considerable number of anthems ; he also published his professorial lectures and various other theoretical writings.

Samuel Wesley (1766–1837) is, however, the most important figure of the time ; he was the son of the famous hymn-writer and nephew of the founder of Methodism, and the younger brother of a capable organist, who never fulfilled his promise as an infant prodigy. He himself was also unusually precocious, being at the age of ten a skilled performer on organ, harpsichord, and violin, and also a prolific composer ; but a severe accident<sup>1</sup> with which he met when he was twenty-

<sup>1</sup> He fell on a dark evening into a deep excavation made for building purposes, and injured the skull in some unknown manner.

one rendered him throughout the rest of his life subject to attacks of something like insanity, frequently prolonged for a considerable period, which unfitted him for the holding of any regular appointment. His works include four Masses and many shorter works for the services of the Roman Church,<sup>1</sup> several Anglican anthems and services, other choral works and a quantity of glees and songs, besides numerous instrumental compositions of all kinds, symphonies, concertos, chamber music and solos. He was acknowledged as the leading organist of his day; and he was the first Englishman to appreciate to the full the genius of John Sebastian Bach, whose cause he propagated with the utmost enthusiasm and in every conceivable manner, sensible or not.

Wesley never attempted to write for the stage; but, besides the composers already named, several others of this period wrote for hardly anything else. Michael Arne (1741-1786), a son of his better-known namesake, wrote a large mass of incidental music for plays in the intervals of fantastic chemical experiments in search of the philosopher's stone; and Thomas Linley (1732-1795)—first a fashionable singing-teacher at Bath, and afterwards director both of oratorio and stage-music at Drury Lane Theatre—produced many very successful works of the same kind.<sup>2</sup> The kind of ballad opera which is chiefly represented by the names of Charles Dibdin (1745-1814), William Shield (1748-1829), and Stephen Storace (1763-1796) is, however, the most typical dramatic product of the time. The first-named was a chorister in Winchester Cathedral, where he received the desultory musical education which was all he ever acquired save by his own efforts. He devoted himself entirely to stage pieces and songs, being in most cases the author of the words also<sup>3</sup>; the theatrical world was his home throughout his life, and his 'table entertainments', in which he appeared at once as author, composer, singer, and

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, uncertain whether he ever formally left the English Church.

<sup>2</sup> Three sons and three daughters of his were all musicians of more or less fame; Thomas Linley the younger, who was drowned at the age of twenty-two, and Eliza Ann, who became the wife of Sheridan, were the most gifted.

<sup>3</sup> He was also a novelist, and the author of a voluminous *History of the Stage*, as well as of a nearly equally voluminous autobiography.



accompanist, carried his songs all over England. William Shield was a musician in the stricter sense of the word, though his early education was hardly more adequate—he was in his youth apprenticed to a boat-builder; he wrote some instrumental music and some theoretical works, and was the leading viola-player in London, but his chief fame is derived from the songs in his dramatic compositions—operas, farces, and pantomimes—of which he wrote a very large number, *Rosina* (1783) being one of the best and most successful. Stephen Storace, son of an Italian double-bass player settled in London, and brother of a famous singer who was the original Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, studied in Italy, and after some travels on the continent returned to England, and in the eight years from 1788 to his early death in 1796 produced a considerable quantity of stage music of various kinds, of which *The Haunted Tower* (1789), *No Song no Supper* (1790), *The Pirates* (1792), and *The Cherokee* (1794) seem to have been the most noteworthy. Other composers of music of similar kind, whose names may be mentioned in passing, were James Hook (1746–1827)—who, in addition to numerous dramatic works and songs, composed some choral music on an extended scale, as well as concertos and sonatas; John Davy (1763–1824), composer of ‘The Bay of Biscay’ among a mass of other things; and William Reeve (1757–1815); but a good many others were nearly as prominent. John Braham (c. 1774–1856) was a tenor singer of exceptional ability, who for very many years held a unique position; he composed all the music of his own part in the majority of the operas in which he sang—his well-known ‘The Death of Nelson’ occurs in *The American* (1811).

Henry Rowley Bishop (1786–1855) was for a long time perhaps the most prominent composer in England. He was connected chiefly with the stage, holding appointments at the chief London theatres and at Vauxhall for many years, during which he produced in all (including some adaptations of operas by Arne, Auber, Boieldieu, Mozart, Meyerbeer and Rossini), no fewer than one hundred and thirty-eight dramatic works of various kinds; he also wrote several choral concert-works, including a sacred cantata entitled *The Seventh Day*, and numerous

smaller compositions. He also held university professorships at Edinburgh from 1841 to 1843, and at Oxford from 1848 till his death, and numerous conducting appointments. A knighthood was conferred on him by Queen Victoria in 1842; this is the earliest instance of such a thing being given by the sovereign to a musician.<sup>1</sup> Charles Edward Horn, Bishop's exact contemporary in birth (1786-1849), was the son of an Anglo-Prussian who, in 1810, published, in conjunction with Wesley, an English edition of Bach's *Wohltemperirtes Clavier*; like Bishop, he concerned himself chiefly with stage music, of which he produced a very large quantity, in much of which he sang himself, but also wrote some oratorios and numerous songs and glees. He was the first prominent English composer to visit America, where he lived from 1833 to 1843, and from 1847 (with a brief interval) till his death.

As we have seen, many of the composers already mentioned wrote glees; but several others made a virtual speciality of unaccompanied vocal music. Of these perhaps the most important was Samuel Webbe (1740-1816)—the father of a similarly named son who was also a composer, though of less note; for many years he held the principal offices at the Catch Club and the Glee Club—the chief societies for the encouragement of such forms of composition—and carried off a very large proportion of the prizes offered. John Stafford Smith (1750-1836), son of a cathedral organist, was from 1784 onwards one of the musical officials of the Chapel Royal; his compositions consist, however, almost exclusively of glees and similar works, but he also devoted much time to musical antiquarianism, producing several important volumes on the subject, and acquiring a very valuable library of printed and manuscript music, much of which was carelessly dispersed at his death and seems to have entirely disappeared. Richard

<sup>1</sup> The knighting in 1803 of John Andrew Stevenson, the musical collaborator of Moore, and in 1811 of George Smart, both at the hands of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, is not altogether parallel. The artistic and literary knights of England are, on the whole, it must be confessed, an astonishingly mixed assemblage, in spite of the real eminence of some of them. But, after all, the list is perhaps no worse than those of most other countries in such matters; when court influence meddles in things of this kind it frequently arrives at conclusions which posterity cannot but consider curious.



John Samuel Stevens (1757-1837) was also an organist—at the Temple Church and the Charterhouse—who devoted himself as a composer entirely to glee-writing; Stephen Paxton (1735-1787), William Paxton (1737-1781), and the Earl of Mornington (1735-1781), father of the Duke of Wellington and professor of music at Dublin University, were also distinguished in the same field. John Wall Callcott (1766-1821), though an organist and theoretician, also wrote little music besides his very numerous glees, catches and canons; in later life (from 1808 onwards), he however produced nothing at all, as his mind gave way under overwork of lecturing and teaching. His son-in-law William Horsley (1774-1858) was also an organist and theoretician (he edited, though with very little understanding, the reprint of Byrd's *Cantiones Sacrae* for the Musical Antiquarian Society) who was chiefly famous as a composer of glees; but Reginald Spofforth (1768-1827), and William Beale (1784-1854), the last of the composers of this kind who need be noticed, seem to have devoted themselves entirely to such work without venturing, even in passing, into other departments.

John Field (1782-1837) may claim a paragraph to himself as virtually a denationalized native of these islands; he was an Irishman by birth and belonged to a musical family that had long been settled in Dublin, but he spent most of his life abroad. He was in early life an apprentice to Clementi, who gave him pianoforte lessons in return for his services as salesman to the firm of Clementi and Co. in London; afterwards he travelled through France, Germany, and Russia, still on the firm's business, and showing off their pianos in the different centres. His remarkably fine playing attracted general attention, and in 1804 he abandoned his post and settled in Russia, where he remained till 1832, being held in the highest esteem alike as performer, composer, and teacher. The next few years he spent in travelling, playing in London and Paris and afterwards in Italy, where, however, his concerts failed to attract and he sank into great poverty; he was rescued from a hospital in Naples, where he had lain for many months, by a Russian family, with whom he travelled back to Moscow, playing with the greatest success at Vienna on the

way, but his health never returned, and he died soon after his arrival in Russia. His compositions include seven piano concertos, and many works of smaller dimensions; he is, however, now almost exclusively known by his Nocturnes, which, as will be seen later, are of unusual historical importance.

As a sort of counterbalance to this continentalized Englishman, two composers may be mentioned who, though foreigners by blood, made this country their home throughout virtually the whole of their musical lives. Muzio Clementi (1752-1832), a Roman by birth, was sent to England as a boy, and apart from three or four continental concert-tours remained here till his death; a pianist of extraordinary attainments, he may, through his influence as player and teacher, be counted the originator of piano technique, and he also displayed his versatile talents as the head of a very successful publishing and manufacturing business. He wrote a large number of compositions, chiefly for his own instrument; among these the well-known studies entitled 'Gradus ad Parnassum' are the most noteworthy. His pupil, John Baptist Cramer (1771-1858); his life thus exactly spanning the gap between Tartini and *Tristan*, the son of a Mannheim violinist who for nearly thirty years held a distinguished position in England, was, like Clementi, virtually an Englishman, though he often travelled abroad, and lived in Germany and France from 1835 to 1845; he followed in the steps of his master not only as virtuoso and composer, but also as music-publisher. His famous piano studies are now his sole remembered works; but he had great influence in his day, and was the one and only contemporary pianist of whose powers Beethoven had any opinion.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of a few persistent questioners like Wesley (who was continually disparaging Handel in comparison with J. S. Bach), the most salient feature of English music during the whole of this period was, after all, the worship of the great Anglo-German and the oratorio-form which he had popularized. The blind adoration of Handelian methods in almost every branch of the art laid a dead weight on English

<sup>1</sup> Ries, *Biographische Notizen*.



music which crushed out of ninety-nine of every hundred composers any vital originality that they might otherwise have displayed; and the public's insatiable appetite for oratorios forced into this channel all who wished to produce serious work on a certain scale. Religious music, in any conceivable sense of the word, these tons of oratorios are not, any more than they are artistic music; the whole thing is mere glazed conventionality. The poetasters of the day evolved, with apparently absolute indiscrimination, librettos from well-nigh every page of the Bible (sometimes to the original words, sometimes to bald versifications); and when the composers were not making oratorios of their own, they were still compiling them out of the mangled remains of other men's music. Turning over these dusty tomes, we meet, over and over again, with music of Handel himself or of Haydn or Mozart or many more in the most astonishingly perverted guises;<sup>1</sup> and the shibboleth of 'sacred music' satisfactorily quieted any uneasy artistic conscience. Nothing has indeed been a greater hindrance to English music than this phrase, which, as used by far too many persons from Handel's day to our own, has no sort of warrant from religion or art or common-sense or anything beyond a fetish-like conventional superstition.

The term oratorio was used indeed very vaguely. Handel himself, as we have seen, used it to include practically any choral work performed in a concert-room or a theatre (and the same signification still survives in America); towards the end of the century it was also used to denote any performance, even of the type of a pure variety entertainment, given during Lent, the general season for oratorios in the strict religious sense. These miscellaneous 'oratorio-concerts', usually given at the two chief theatres, continued to be in vogue for a long time; but their artistic influences were of the slenderest importance.

Heavy as was the weight of foreign influence on most English music during the eighteenth century, the period nevertheless saw the birth of two specifically native forms of art. In the previous chapter we have described the rise of the ballad

<sup>1</sup> One of the most unconsciously humorous of all is Arnold's anthem-version of the remarkably secular overture to Arne's *Artaxerxes*.

operas: and some half-century later an equally English product, the Glee, rose with great rapidity to a pre-eminent popularity, which it retained till the beginning of the Victorian era. We have already seen how Pepusch and Immyns fostered, in the 'Madrigal Society', the old taste for unaccompanied singing even among Italianized surroundings; and the Glee Clubs that came into existence towards the end of the century were similarly designed to combine social and artistic pleasures in ways other than were afforded by catches like those of Restoration times—though these still continued to enjoy a great vogue as relaxations from more serious music-making. The glee<sup>1</sup> indeed was a compromise; it was more definitely melodious and rhythmical than the madrigal, and more especially laid out for solo male voices, while at the same time it preserved the artistic interests of more or less continuous rather than strophic design and a certain amount of contrapuntal elaboration, as well as the homogeneity of tone resulting from the absence of accompaniment.<sup>2</sup> The 'Glee Club' *par excellence* was founded in 1787 and had a life of seventy years; the rather earlier, but still existing, 'Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Catch Club', founded in 1761 (which for many years offered annual prizes for the best glees, catches, and canons), and the later 'Concentores Sodales', both displayed similarly great activity in encouraging this form of art.<sup>3</sup> Popularity, however, gradually brought with it a certain declension of taste: glees consisting of mere bald successions of plain chords became too frequent, and the homogeneity of manner which the masters of the form show, even when the words demand brief and sharply contrasted sections, gave place, in the inferior specimens, to a fragmentary and inorganic style.

At the same time there was considerable interest shown in the older English composers, especially those for the church;

<sup>1</sup> From the Anglo-Saxon 'gligg' = entertainment; the term does not at all necessarily exclude the expression of serious emotion. Brewer's 'Turn, Amaryllis' (in Playford's third set of 'Ayres and Dialogues', 1659) is the earliest use of the word to denote part-music; it was used vaguely for a century after till it became specialized.

<sup>2</sup> Accompanied choruses have been sometimes styled glees; but that is, strictly, a misuse of the name.

<sup>3</sup> The still existing 'Hibernian Catch Club' (probably the oldest musical society in Europe) had been founded in Dublin as early as 1680.



Boyce's collection of Cathedral Music found continuations in the large publications edited by Arnold and by John Page, a cathedral singer himself. And at about the same time the first two histories of music written by Englishmen appeared; that of Sir John Hawkins in 1776 and that of Charles Burney at intervals from 1776 to 1789. Both are of great value still, though more recent research has altered many things in them, and neither author possessed any very exceptional qualities. Hawkins was not himself a practical musician, and his main strength lay in his antiquarian researches; Burney, though technically skilled (his books on the contemporary state of music in continental countries are full of interest) had a curious prejudice against the earlier secular music, especially madrigals,<sup>1</sup> and an equally (to us) curious belief in the permanent importance of every third-rate Italian opera produced in London in his own time. Stafford Smith's *Musica antiqua* (1812)—a collection of nearly two hundred pieces, mainly English—is, though unorganized and virtually unedited, of very great interest, and forms a valuable supplement to the numerous musical extracts printed by Hawkins and Burney; already in 1779 he had published a collection of 'Ancient Songs' chiefly from the 'Fayrfax Book' mentioned in chapter ii. Both Burney and Smith, like practically all their contemporaries, express unbounded complacency with the position of English music in their time; but they seem on the whole to have referred more to the standard of performance than to the quality of the native productions, though they certainly rated the latter considerably higher than posterity has been inclined to do.

It is true, indeed, that about the end of the eighteenth century English music-lovers could hear a great deal of admirable vocal and instrumental performance; the days of singers like Caffarelli and Farinelli might be over, but on the other hand music was far more widely cultivated, and the general average of technical attainment was far higher. The 'Ancient Concerts', founded in 1776,<sup>2</sup> set a worthy standard

<sup>1</sup> 'There is doubtless more verve, more science, and fire in the worst of Handel's choruses than in the greatest effort of these old madrigalists' (iii. 131).

<sup>2</sup> They lasted till 1848; the meaning of the title was that no composi-

and did much to keep alive the knowledge of Purcell and of the madrigalian composers, even though the reigning Handel-worship led the directors to devote an altogether disproportionate share of wellnigh every programme to Handelian extracts; the 'Vocal Concerts' (1792-1821) also largely advanced musical knowledge, especially between the years 1800 and 1815. Another enterprise, known as the 'Professional Concerts', did much to popularize the works of Haydn; and it was owing to the secession from these concerts of a German violinist named Salomon, who started rival performances of his own, that the composer himself was induced to visit this country in 1791-2 and 1794-5. (Previously, in 1786, Salomon had endeavoured to secure the presence of Mozart, who had created a sensation in England as a boy prodigy in 1764-5; but the negotiations fell through.) Haydn seems to have recognized that he learned much by his visits, especially through the opportunities, wider than any obtainable abroad, of hearing choral singing, both accompanied and unaccompanied; he was present in 1791 at the last 'Handel Commemoration' held in Westminster Abbey, when more than a thousand performers took part—the first of these festivals was held in 1784 and there were several others in the intermediate years. In the purveying of instrumental music foreigners took the lead; Karl Abel, a distinguished German viola-da-gamba player, and John Christian Bach, a son of the great Sebastian, and himself a composer of considerable facility but little artistic steadiness, were the joint conductors of a series of fashionable concerts from 1765 to 1782, and their successes as aristocratic teachers and performers attracted many other continental musicians to England. Some of these, like Clementi, made this country their permanent home—Cramer was, as we have seen, the son of such an immigrant and virtually an Englishman all his life—while others, like Dussek and Moscheles, returned to the continent after some (in the latter case, twenty) years of exile; but to all foreign musicians we offered, as indeed we have done ever since, generous inducements to settle in our midst, and the methods they set

tions written during a floating period of twenty years previously were included in the programmes.



were followed, sometimes rather too slavishly, by our own native professors. However, the foundation of the Philharmonic Society<sup>1</sup> in 1813 and the Royal Academy of Music in 1823 did much to keep the balance fair; and the numerous recurrent provincial festivals of which we hear during this period, in addition to the older events at Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford, spread taste through districts usually untouched to any great extent by the foreign-loving fashions of the metropolis.

Over the music of this period one artistic figure towers, that of Samuel Wesley. It is true indeed that, as we shall see later, he wrote a considerable mass of purely commonplace work; but after all a composer must be judged at his best, and it is in virtue of the finest of his religious productions that he takes place, beyond all possible question, among the great English musicians—yet they are not very numerous, and some of the most noteworthy are unknown except to those who have worked through the very miscellaneous MSS. at the British Museum. He is differentiated from many of his contemporaries by the fact that he wrote no oratorios after the age of eleven; but *Ruth* (the airs in which were written at the age of six) and *The Death of Abel* are really quite as good as the grown-up work of most other composers of the time. 'Hail liberty' and 'Go, my Ruth, the pattern fairest' are, in their graceful flow and solid harmonic foundation, astounding productions for an infant of six or seven; and a simultaneously dated Pasticcio-book of mixed vocal and instrumental music contains some things of quite Mozartian promise, for example, the 'Evening Hymn'—a tune of real point, well organized, and furnished with an excellent bass. His other ecclesiastical works in large forms consist of several masses and a long and elaborate 'Confitebor' on an oratorio-scale. The Mass in C 'Missa de Spiritu Sancto', written at the age of eighteen, is a really good work in a rather obvious style—very strong and clean, but not specially individual; the 'Confitebor' is, however, much more mature, and was apparently (though with more than doubtful justice) considered by its composer as his

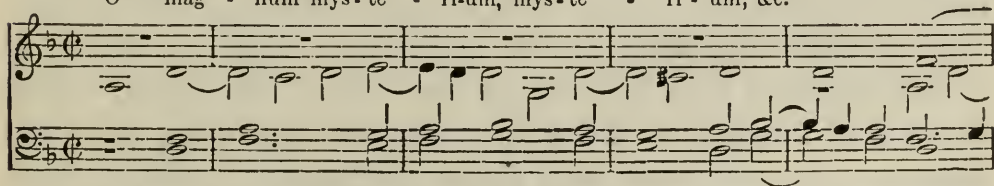
<sup>1</sup> It is curious how the Philharmonic audience still retains to a large extent its original character of a friendly professional club.

masterpiece. In it we see strong traces of Italian influence, chiefly of the Leo and Pergolesi type—though the fine unaccompanied chorus ‘Mandavit in aeternum’, with its noble closing pages, looks back to the golden age of Italian art—and there is a good deal of florid writing of a sometimes rather perfunctory character, brilliant bravura for soprano solo, and so on; but the chorus just mentioned, and, in different styles, the Mozartian duet ‘Redemptorem misit populo’ and the last chorus ‘Sicut erat’ strike notes that are not very easily forgotten. Prefixed to the score is a very high commendation by Burney, and it is no doubt just what one whose eclecticism ran in the fashionable channels liked; but still it is on the whole a distinctly fine work, and if we object to the otiose instrumental ritornelli, it may be counted as a sign of grace to the composer, that he (or some one presumably under his directions) has subsequently struck a pencil through many of them. But Wesley was at his greatest where he had nothing (or next to nothing) to think of but choral voices; the few works that he wrote for the Anglican church service—such as the massive anthem ‘Thou, O God, art praised in Sion’ and some others—are far above the ordinary type, but still to see him at the climax of his powers we must turn to the motets or antiphons that were, there can be no doubt, written for the Roman ritual. The gorgeously powerful and impressive eight-part ‘In exitu Israel’ is a masterpiece that places its composer on a very lofty pedestal; and the also more or less familiar ‘Exultate Deo’ and ‘Dixit Dominus’ fall only a little below in grand dignity of manner. But besides these works, a considerable number exist, many as yet in manuscript,<sup>1</sup> which are of a different type, though at least as fine; the ‘Carmen funebre’ beginning ‘Omnia vanitas’, or ‘O admirabile commercium’, or ‘O magnum mysterium’, with its mysterious opening—

No. 91.

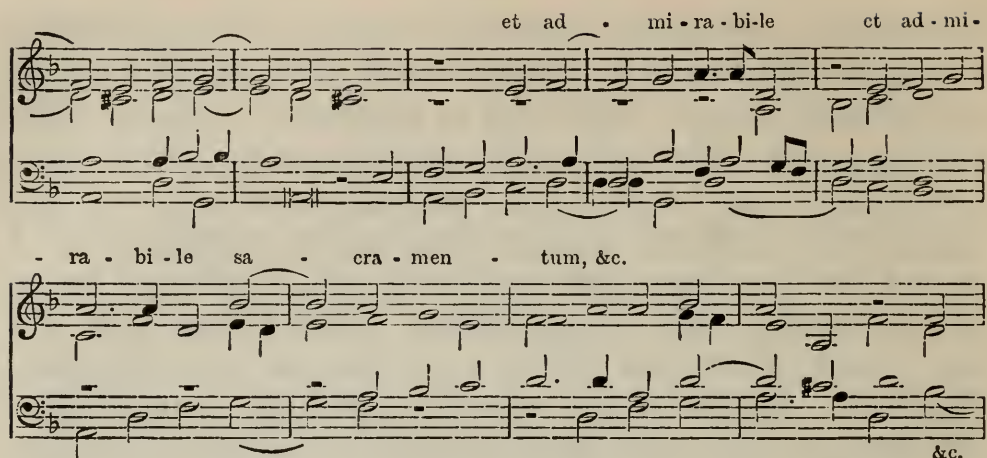
[*Slow and soft*]

O mag - num mys - te - ri - um, mys - te - ri - um, &amp;c.



<sup>1</sup> Brit. Mus. Add. MSS. 35001 and 35003 may be consulted for those yet unprinted.





or the serenely beautiful 'O quam suavis est', or very many more, are (though certainly not 'false antiques') redolent through and through of the great Roman traditions of the sixteenth century. They do not show the superabundant vigour and modern vitality of the three motets by which alone Wesley is generally known; but on the other hand nothing by any other Englishman since the days of Byrd is so full of that sort of dim, introspective, tender austerity that marks the great masterpieces of the old Catholic composers. It is indeed strange that these really noble things should be so neglected; to turn to them after a course of the blatant commonplace of the ordinary eighteenth-century Anglican music is a relief which only those who have experienced it can understand.

Three other men, however—Battishill, Attwood, and Crotch—did something to keep church music alive in those dead days; and of these Battishill must certainly be ranked first, in virtue of such things as his anthems 'Call to remembrance', and 'O Lord, look down from heaven'. The former has secured the wider fame, and it no doubt represents the standard eighteenth-century manner at its very best; it is gracefully melodious and also almost always quite strong, and its expressive climaxes are built up in really fine, vigorous style. It is sincere, and does its best to live up to its ideals; there are a few touches of the empty conventions of the time, but they are only very few, and the earlier portion (which is considerably the greater) shows many traces of the influence of

the Elizabethans in its dignity and its massive technique. But the austerer 'O Lord, look down from heaven' is really Battishill's masterpiece, and represents the highwater-mark of English church music between Greene and the younger Wesley; instead of the mosaic of little pieces that we so often find, it is one continuous movement throughout, of altogether first-rate quality from start to finish, and full of variety and artistic life—



There is not perhaps the individuality of the best work of his predecessors Croft or Greene; but there is none of the slight flavour of sentimentality which rather spoils the second part of 'Call to remembrance', and there are no conventional loose ends about the workmanship. It is a matter for much regret that Battishill never again rose to the height of this remarkably fine anthem, with which English church music, even in its worst days, need not be ashamed to speak with its enemies in the gate.

The talent of Attwood was of a slenderer kind, and he never rose anywhere near the height of 'O Lord, look down from heaven'. He was, as we have seen, a pupil of Mozart; and his general manner is rather like a dim reflection of his master's less inspired moments. Of Handelian traits there is hardly a vestige; the new influence has practically ousted the old altogether. The anthem 'Let the words of my mouth', for example, is marked by an agreeable, if not particularly dignified sort of sparkle of a singularly Mozartian type—



No. 93.

[Allegretto]

SOLO.

Let the words of my mouth and the me-di-ta-tion of my

heart be al-ways ac-cept-a-ble in thy . . . sight

and the graceful turns of harmony in the Epiphany anthem 'O God, who by the leading of a star' show a vein not previously struck in English church music. But there is no real individuality of utterance; Attwood nearly always seems to be repeating a well-learned lesson. Often no doubt he repeats it really admirably; the little hymn 'Come holy Ghost' is in its way charming, and, in a larger style, the extended anthems 'Teach me thy way, O Lord', and 'They that go down to the sea in ships' are (like many more) pleasing and refined, with good melody and well-devised harmony, and altogether the work of a musician and a gentleman. It is all quite enjoyable in its mild way, but it all comes to very little; and a course of Attwood leaves really a more unsatisfactory total impression than a course of men who may write much worse music than ever he did, but at the same time occasionally blunder into something that grips attention.

Ten years younger than Attwood, and more than thirty younger than Battishill, Crotch represents yet another style. He has little or none of the graceful if ineffectual purity of Attwood, still less of the massive power to which Battishill could rise; he is dominated by the Handelian traditions, and owes, unlike Battishill, nothing to any influence of earlier date. On the whole, his anthems are not much more than decorous Georgian work, clean and dull, with somewhat stilted expression and much formal padding; occasionally he tries, without much success, to be realistically modern, as at the passage 'though the earth be moved' in the anthem 'God is our hope and strength', or the rather elementary trumpet

fanfare in 'The Lord, even the most mighty God, hath spoken'. But he rises above the majority of his fellows, inasmuch as he can, not infrequently, display a sort of polished if old-fashioned melodiousness that is even now not at all unattractive, as in the well-known 'How dear are thy counsels' and others; and once, in 'My God, my God, look upon me', Crotch very largely drops his conventions, and writes really pathetic sincere music—not particularly deep, but in its way of distinct tender beauty. This, however, is indeed a solitary example of Crotch's best work; but his large oratorio *Palestine* may be accepted as a satisfactory compendium of whatever other excellences he possessed. And, as a matter of fact, it is impossible to deny that *Palestine* is the one and only even moderately outstanding English oratorio in the century between Arne's *Judith* and Bennett's *The Woman of Samaria*, countless as was the music of that kind produced during those years; a good deal of it is no doubt a somewhat unappetizing mixture of Handelian odds and ends with the consciously polite elegancies of 1812, but the criticism of it as 'stucco made to look like stone' is perhaps a little unfair. 'The dramatic chorus 'Let Sinai tell' is in its way not at all unimpressive, and the still frequently heard quartet 'Lo, star-led chiefs' is very agreeable music; Crotch does not try to do more than he can adequately manage, he occasionally has quite happy ideas, and his workmanship is thoroughly solid and dignified. But 'the best in this kind are but shadows'; and Crotch, like Attwood, has to suffer the penalties which sooner or later are the lot of composers who have no minds to call their own.

But still the other church music of the time shows traces of hardly even any one else's mind. Arnold was a person of great fame in his day, but he is now very nearly unreadable, though the vapidly respectable 'Who is this that cometh' is still heard in our cathedrals; Clarke-Whitfeld—an amiably unobjectionable composer, who occasionally had rather happy ideas which his technique was not strong enough to develop—also still survives to some extent. After all, only a very few of the church composers of these dark days dropped to the painful insipidity of such things as 'Jackson in F'<sup>1</sup>; as a rule they

<sup>1</sup> The work of William Jackson (1730-1803), organist of Exeter Cathedral.



knew and loved their Handel well enough to keep them free from anything like *ad captandum* cheapness of effect. Most of them had no capacity worth mentioning for anything beyond accurate counterpoint ; but their music is nothing worse than intolerably dull. It was reserved for a later generation of English church musicians to discover that dullness could be blended with other more harmful qualities.

There is a strong family likeness about all the catches and canons and glees of this period ; however much they may differ in musical quality—and at the worst they are very dull and undistinguished—they almost all show the same sense of vocal effect, the same flowing ease of style, the same decorous cheerfulness which, in the best specimens, result in the production of works which, though for the most part artistically very slight, are very agreeable, and thoroughly fulfil a worthy end. Sometimes—rather illegitimately, but there is perhaps no other handy word available—the term glee is used to include works in the ordinary glee style, but provided with independent instrumental accompaniment ; but these cases are comparatively rare, and the great bulk of this secular vocal literature, whether, as with some glees, of considerable dimensions, or, as with the catches and canons, merely a few bars long, reverts to the older ideals of unaccompanied singing, which had been wellnigh forgotten by composers for a century and a half.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, indeed, as in parts of Webbe's fine 'Discord, dire sister' and especially Beale's 'Awake, sweet Muse', Mornington's 'As it fell upon a day', and the singularly beautiful 'O sing unto my roundelaie' of Samuel Wesley, we hear a sort of echo of the great madrigalists of the older time ; and there is often plenty of solid workmanship shown, even when the methods are entirely unaffected by Elizabethan influences.

As a rule, the composers of the best glees did little noteworthy work in other fields. Battishill's charming, though very slender, 'Amidst the myrtles' is one of the best of the few specimens of good secular work by the anthem-writers

<sup>1</sup> We have, indeed, noticed earlier the catches of the Purcellian epoch ; but there was then nothing like the same wide artistic interest shown in this form of composition.

of the time, who as a general rule—Attwood's 'Hark the curfew's solemn sound' is a well-known instance—were by no means at their best outside their organ-lofts. Samuel Wesley himself, apart from the charming piece just mentioned and the expressive 'Here shall the morn' (the words from Pope's *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*), produced little of any special merit in this field; when he attempts great poetry, as in the settings of 'The glories of our blood and state' and 'Roses, their sharp spines being gone', he drops into mere stiff, stilted commonplace, and his ordinary social glees, whether purely convivial or more decorous in tone, do not equal the best specimens of those who found their primary medium of expression in such work.

Narrow as the range of the typical glee-composers is, we can without much difficulty distinguish their individual characteristics, though it is true that very many of their works are in a sort of negative style that was common to all. Webbe's 'When winds breathe soft' or 'Discord, dire sister', the closing section of which may be quoted—

No. 94.

*(Andante)*

But love - ly Peace in an - gel form, de - scend - ing

*(p grazioso)*

quells the ris - ing storm: Soft ease and sweet con - tent . . shall

reign, and Dis - cord ne - ver rise . . . a - gain.



may be taken as representative of the best glees of the ordinary mould—solid, tuneful music, excellent in workmanship and admirably effective; or we may select Cooke's well-designed 'As now the shades of eve' or some of the glees of Mornington, a musicianly composer with (at his best) a sort of aristocratic distinction of style that places him rather apart from the others. The melodious glees of Stevens and Spofforth—the former's 'Ye spotted snakes' or 'The cloud-capt towers' or 'Sigh no more ladies', or the latter's 'My dear mistress' or 'Hail smiling morn'—though slighter than some others, are clean, pleasant music; and Stephen Paxton's 'How sweet, how fresh', or his brother William's 'Breathe soft ye winds', while somewhat artificially pastoral in style, and rather more consciously polite than most, are, nevertheless, quite dainty and agreeable. With Callcott and Horsley we see rather more divergence of manner; the latter's admirable 'By Celia's arbour' or 'See the chariot at hand' or the eight-part ode 'Daughter of faith, awake' hardly seem to be from the same pen as the very poor and stilted 'When shall we three meet again' (the words of which are *not* by Shakespeare), and Callcott shows the same inequalities. Among his works we see the exceedingly dull 'Forgive, blest shade' and the very elementary setting of the 'Erlking' side by side with the breezy, spirited 'You gentlemen of England'<sup>1</sup> and pleasantly solid and musicianly pages like 'In the lonely vale of streams' or 'With sighs, sweet rose' or 'Who comes so dark' or 'Father of heroes'; Callcott, indeed, though he never equalled the best work of Webbe and one or two others, is perhaps the most prominent figure of the time in this field, and certainly one of the most prolific.

A feature which markedly separates the English glee from the male-voice music of other countries is the prominent part assigned to the high counter-tenor or alto voice—a particular development of falsetto singing which has persisted in our cathedral choirs from the time of Charles II to the present day, but has never been known abroad. The quotation from 'Discord, dire sister' given above exemplifies very well the kind of writing that is specially suited to this type of voice,

<sup>1</sup> Often known as 'Ye mariners of England'.

the very narrow emotional range of which has always acted as a drawback to the music in which it assumes any outstanding part.

Apart from the glees, which stand by themselves in a separate group, the whole of the secular vocal music of the time is coloured through and through by the influences springing from the ballad operas; nearly all the work is of virtually the same general type, and it never makes any difference whether it was primarily intended for theatrical surroundings or not. It is to Arne and the traditional folk-music of earlier date that ultimately the parentage of all these crowds of songs must be ascribed; but in the sixty years that this period covers we see a gradual decline, from the earlier generation represented by Shield and Hook and Dibdin and Storace to the later represented by Horn and Bishop. Shield was perhaps the most naturally gifted of all; a song like 'The Wolf' is, indeed, poor stuff, but on the other hand some of the tunes in *Rosina*—which seems to have been generally considered his best opera—are of singular grace and purity,<sup>1</sup> and his music is, as a rule, free from the conventional floridities that disfigure much contemporary work, though he descends to them occasionally, and then falls completely to pieces. A really very charming little work like 'O happy fair' stands out prominently among its weaker fellows; and rather more conventional music like the also well-known 'The Thorn' is yet in its way quite pure and pleasant.<sup>2</sup> Hook's style is a little more consciously elegant; he has a special partiality for a sort of feminine daintiness, and undoubtedly, in his own line, he is a composer of a real, though slender, distinction. 'O listen to the voice of love,' 'The blackbird,' 'The lass of Richmond hill,' and others are, if less artistically strong than the best work of Shield, very graceful little songs, and 'pretty' in the worthy sense of that often abused word. Storace again, though less capable than Shield or Hook, often

<sup>1</sup> *Rosina* was published as 'composed and selected' by Shield; it is very often, throughout these ballad operas, quite impossible to be certain of the authorship of particular songs. Probably, however, the songs otherwise unspecified may be taken as Shield's own work; but it is certainly nothing more than a probability, which is always liable to exceptions.

<sup>2</sup> The familiar 'The Arethusa' is not by Shield. See chapter xii.



produced tunes that are worth the remembrance of posterity ; like Shield, he falls to pieces when he attempts to be advanced and floridly elaborate, but ballad operas like *No Song, no Supper* or *The Cherokee* contain melodies which to the lovers of the contemporary type may appeal as among the best of their kind, and *No Song, no Supper* shows, in a very graceful little quintet (a harmonized ballad-like tune), an exception to the rule of the almost universal inferiority of the concerted to the solo numbers. Dibdin has survived for us almost exclusively as a composer of songs connected with the sea ; but his ballad operas are, as a rule, much like those of the rest. Admirable tune though 'Tom Bowling' is, he but rarely reached that level ; and he is certainly a much less polished composer than Shield or Hook, or indeed than Storace. His amiable inoffensive songs are all of one general type, and do not amount to very much, clean and healthy though the music is ; occasionally he can turn a phrase quite happily, but, as a rule, he confines himself to such a setting of his words, whether they be sentimental or jovial, as shall be just sufficiently interesting to carry them along, and not so much so as to be capable of remembrance on its own merits. Others, too, there were, like the elder Linley—a graceful composer with a style in many respects much resembling Shield's—or his rather less capable son (the composer of 'O bid your faithful Ariel fly'), or Percy, with his charming if rather informulate 'Wapping old stairs', who at this time produced work which, slender though it is, is at its best, like that of the four more prominent composers first mentioned, a genuine and welcome legacy to the store of English music. It is notable, however, that nearly all the vitalized songs written at the latter end of the eighteenth century were the work of composers who are virtually unknown in other fields. The elder Linley and Shield produced, it is true, excellent concerted vocal music ; but almost all the solo songs of the best-known glee writers are singularly perfunctory,<sup>1</sup> and those of the church musicians are no better. Arnold's still fairly familiar 'Flow, thou regal purple stream' comes to much less

<sup>1</sup> Some, however—like Stevens' 'Sigh no more, ladies'—originally written as concerted music, are now often performed as solos.

than the best bacchanalian songs of the pure secularists; Attwood's lyrics are singularly feeble, and the shoals of songs of Samuel Wesley in the British Museum manuscript volumes, in spite of the variety afforded by the frequent use of foreign languages such as French and Greek and the occasional emergence of some moderately good tune of the folk-song type, are on the whole a mere mass of dullness. The times had certainly changed since a primarily ecclesiastical musician like Boyce could write 'Heart of oak'.

At its worst, the music of Shield and his followers was indeed thin and dull, but it always retained a certain freedom and naturalness of utterance. But, later on, the type of song which the ballad operas had popularized declined in spontaneity, and became stiff and pompous. Horn could sometimes turn out clean and fairly solid work of an agreeable, if rather starchy, type; but most of his music is a sort of quasi-professorial attempt at an imitation of the older essentially democratic style. He is, indeed, a capable workman, and is never guilty of the theatrical emptiness of things like his contemporary Braham's 'Death of Nelson'; but nearly all the early fresh charm has withered, and 'The deep, deep sea' is a very miserable successor to the older sailor songs. 'Cherry ripe' and some other similar melodies show traces of Shield's grace and easy tunefulness; but even here the touch is considerably heavier. Bishop also represents an undeniable decline, but in a somewhat different direction. He could, indeed, from time to time show himself the possessor of a certain vein of pleasing, if slender, melody, and things like 'Tell me, my heart' or 'Should he upbraid' are in their rather stilted way agreeable enough; very trifling though they are from a strictly artistic standpoint, there is a certain air of courtly, old-fashioned politeness about their easy-going strains which has not yet lost its attraction. But Bishop's average work fell much below this level; his general style is one of rather feeble sentimentality, lacking the sort of solidity of that of Horn and also the distinctiveness of the older composers. A paltry tune like 'Home, sweet home'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This production first appeared in the opera *Clari, or the Maid of Milan* (1823); it was then styled a 'Sicilian tune', but other evidence makes it



represents fairly well the sort of music to which he was capable of rising in his ordinary moods; in its way it is not altogether inexpressive, but the whole is conceived on, artistically, a thoroughly low plane. Bishop was indeed a distinctly capable sort of musician, and his operas show considerably more power over the technique of choral writing than had been evident in the native stage music for many years previously; but there is no real sincerity in his careless, popularity-hunting work, and, apart from a small handful, his songs have virtually nothing to say to the musician. His best things show, indeed, that he possessed talents that, combined with more steadiness of aim, might have produced something really vital; but all that he did was to squander his endowment.

During all this period native instrumental music was at a very low ebb. Vocal music could stand out fairly well against the cult of the imported foreigner; he took no interest in anthem or glee, and if alien oratorios were sometimes produced, at any rate they had to be translated, and moreover English composers wrote many more. But instrumental music had neither the refuge of ecclesiasticism nor that of conviviality to which to retreat, nor could it call on the support of the national language; the consequence was that it fell instantly before the onslaught of the foreigner, and we may safely say that no instrumental work of even second-rate merit was produced by any resident English-born composer during the whole period. A few placidly ineffectual organ pieces, a few tentative attempts to do something with the new pianoforte, a few childish imitations of the new foreign orchestral works—these are all we have. When we examine the volumes of Wesley's instrumental compositions, we are at once struck by the astonishing difference in quality between them and his vocal masterpieces; the latter speak with a living voice, the former are virtually, one and all, mere vague routine work. Dim visions there are now and then of something vital; there is a symphony in B flat with an Andante less square in rhythm than most, and a finale unusually flexible

wellnigh certain that it is Bishop's own, though there is, indeed, a sort of Italian flavour about its feebly languishing phrases.

and nicely freakish in a Haydnesque style—at a very considerable distance. Some of the organ concertos show curious features: the finale of one of them is based on *Rule Britannia*, and another contains an exact transcription (duly acknowledged) of the D major fugue from the first book of Bach's *Das wohltemperirte Clavier*, given straight through twice over, first as an organ solo, and then scored for full orchestra—when the brass, unable, in the days before valves, to play more than the natural notes, confines itself to incongruously military fanfares edged in here and there whenever the harmony allows. A movement like this, sandwiched in between Wesley's own decorous platitudes, must have sounded very strange; but at any rate he seems to have been determined to force his beloved Bach down his auditors' throats somehow. But hardly any of Wesley's own instrumental work (or indeed, for that matter, little of his choral either) shows the remotest trace of John Sebastian's influence; all these symphonies and the rest are steeped in the facile, empty mellifluousness of the great man's feeble son Christian, to whose temporary influence on English music we have already referred. And where Samuel Wesley failed, it was out of the question for lesser men to succeed; even the inferior Handelianism that, as we have seen, marked nearly all the instrumental work of the mid-eighteenth century was far preferable to this bastard sort of style, which borrowed the skeleton-outlines of the new forms being built up by Haydn and Mozart while absolutely failing to fathom their meaning, and at the same time, though retaining odds and ends of Handel's phraseology, lost the grasp of his methods also. Indeed, this state of things lasted till the advent of Sterndale Bennett; it is extraordinary how microscopically little influence Haydn and Mozart, popular as they were, had over English instrumental composers of the time, except as regards the merest externals. English music threw itself back on the vocal medium, and in the instrumental field hardly tried even to copy the great men, much less to compete with them; Handel had proved so effective a crusher as to put a stop at last even to the capacity for imitating himself.

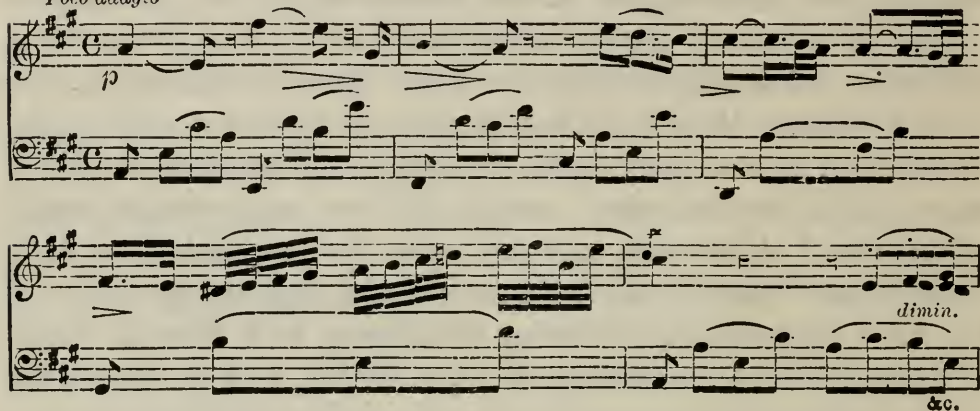
Practically the sole noteworthy instrumental music of the



time from an English pen was not written in England. Field wrote, as we have seen, a very large quantity of music, all of which, with the exception of one small handful, is to-day in an irretrievably dusty condition; but the little volume of his Nocturnes still possesses much more than historical interest. The name, since so often degraded, seems to be his own invention<sup>1</sup>; these slender piano pieces are indeed curiously original for their date. It is easy to see their deep influence on the nocturnes of Chopin, as regards the types of melody and also, especially, the methods of writing for the instrument; and we can also see how in both one and the other the expressiveness sometimes, in their less happy moments, comes rather perilously near sentimentality. It is by a handful of the nocturnes that Field really lives; a piece like that beginning as follows (a most beautiful thing, and its composer's masterpiece)—

No. 95.

*Poco adagio*



or the nocturnes in A flat and C minor, or some few others, are full of singularly refined and limpid music which has very real distinction of manner—distinction indeed of a kind that very many little piano pieces by composers far greater on the whole than Field fail to display. Field's instrument has only one string—his notions of structure are as a rule somewhat elementary, and outside the nocturnes his music is totally negligible; but the best of these exquisitely polished

<sup>1</sup> There is, however, a Notturmo of Mozart for strings and horns—a work in three movements.

little miniatures, with their delicate melodies and their shy fugitive gracefulness, will long serve to keep his name fragrant. They and Wesley's motets—a curious conjunction—are by far the most artistically self-subsisting specimens of English music of the period.

Though the bad work of Field bears a very strong family resemblance to the bad work of Clementi and Cramer and Moscheles, perhaps the three most prominent figures in the English instrumental world during his lifetime, yet there is a great gulf fixed between the nocturnes and the studies which are the only surviving productions of any of the three, beyond some sonatas of Clementi, certainly much the most solidly gifted musician of them, and capable of writing music possessing considerable freshness and point, when he was not (as in the studies) thinking wellnigh exclusively of technical considerations. Vastly superior artistically as the studies of all three are to the totally unmusical effusions of their contemporary Czerny, yet it is difficult to imagine that the modern pianist would know much about them had they not been devised with quite exceptional paedagogic skill; we must respect Clementi and Cramer as very worthy figures in the history of music in England, cosmopolitan as their influence was (the equally worthy Moscheles spent the bulk of his life in Germany), and the first-named as one who, from the technical point of view, occupies a position of great importance in general history, but as artists we could give up all their studies for a single one of the best nocturnes of Field.

Indeed, the seventy or eighty years that centre round 1800 are the nadir of English musical composition; a few things here and there, as we have seen, served to rescue the torch of our art from utter extinction, but still almost all the really finest work owes its quality to more or less close adherence to the great models of the past—only in the nocturnes of Field is a modestly new note struck. When we reflect what was happening in Germany, we can only take refuge in shamed silence and console ourselves with remembering what German composers were like in the sixteenth century. After all, there is considerably less



difference between Wesley's 'In exitu Israel' and a symphony of Beethoven than there is between a Wilbye madrigal and anything a contemporary Austrian produced; and even if we have to confess that all through the lifetimes of the great Viennese masters English music was in comparison a virtually negligible quantity, still our sleep was not that of death.

## CHAPTER X

### EARLY VICTORIAN MUSIC

WE may perhaps take some thirteen composers, arranged in order of birth, as typical of English music during this period—Pearsall, John Barnett, Goss, Balfe, Hatton, Sebastian Wesley, Loder, George Macfarren, Henry Smart, Walmisley, Pierson, Bennett, and Ouseley.

Robert Lucas Pearsall (1795–1856) was a wealthy amateur of an old Gloucestershire family: he was born at Clifton, but the greater part of his life was spent in Germany, at Mainz, Carlsruhe, and finally at Wartensee, on the Lake of Constance. He was always keenly interested in literary and archaeological subjects as well as music; and in addition to his compositions produced several theoretical and antiquarian works. His numerous specimens of ecclesiastical music still remain almost entirely in manuscript; his published works consist nearly exclusively of choral songs and madrigals.

John Barnett, who was born in 1802, and died, after many years' retirement, in 1890, was a second cousin of Meyerbeer, his father's name being similarly Beer before his settlement in England; he was of mixed Prussian and Hungarian blood, but always counted himself as an Englishman. He sang in opera as a boy with much success; and except for numerous songs and some larger works that were never performed, devoted himself entirely to dramatic music, until, in middle life, he established himself as a singing teacher at Cheltenham, when he practically abandoned composition except on a small scale. *The Mountain Sylph*, produced in 1834, is Barnett's most famous opera.

John Goss (1800–1880) was a chorister of the Chapel Royal, and a pupil of Attwood, whom he succeeded as organist of St. Paul's Cathedral; apart from some glees, his note-



worthy compositions consist entirely of ecclesiastical music. A similar concentration is shown in the work of Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876), a son of Samuel Wesley; like Goss, he started his musical life at the Chapel Royal, and was subsequently organist of Hereford Cathedral, Leeds Parish Church, and Winchester and Gloucester Cathedrals. Thomas Attwood Walmisley (1814-1856) was another composer of the same school; he was the son of Thomas Forbes Walmisley, a composer of agreeable glees, and was a pupil of his godfather Attwood. His adult life was spent at Cambridge, where he was University Professor, and organist simultaneously of three colleges, as well as of St. Mary's Church; his chief works are contained in the volume of 'Cathedral Music' published after his death by his father, but he also wrote a good many specimens of secular vocal music.

Michael William Balfe (1808-1870), was, on the other hand, an almost exclusively operatic composer. Born in Dublin, he removed to England when a boy, but for several years led a roving life on the continent, studying in more or less desultory fashion at Rome and Milan, and afterwards appearing as an opera singer in many other Italian cities as well as in Paris. Throughout his life, indeed, Balfe had a strong predilection for the continent, and produced works in Germany, Austria, and Russia, as well as in France and Italy; but after 1833 he resided chiefly in London, and, abandoning public singing after a few years, devoted himself almost entirely to operatic composition. His most successful works were *The Siege of Rochelle* (1835), *The Bohemian Girl* (1843), *The Rose of Castille* (1857), and *Satanella* (1858).

Edward James Loder (1813-1865) was similarly chiefly an operatic composer; he was the son of a music-publisher at Bath, and studied under Ferdinand Ries at Frankfort. Of his dramatic works *The Night Dancers*, produced in 1846, is the most remarkable; he also wrote numerous songs, a set including some of the best of them being issued by subscription after his enforced retirement, owing to cerebral disease, in 1856. John Liptrot Hatton (1809-1886) spent, like Loder, much of his life in performing the duties of a theatrical conductor; but his stage, as well as his ecclesiastical

music has been forgotten in the popularity of his songs for one or more voices, of which he wrote a very large number.

George Alexander Macfarren (1813–1887) was one of the most industrious musicians of his time, in spite of the blindness from which he suffered for the greater part of his life; he succeeded Bennett, his junior in age, both as University Professor at Cambridge and as Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, of which he had been for many years one of the chief teachers. Oratorios, operas, cantatas, symphonies and other orchestral works, and very numerous smaller instrumental and vocal compositions, poured in profusion from his pen; and, in addition to his teaching work, he was also busy as editor, critic, and lecturer, besides producing several theoretical treatises. His contemporary, Henry Smart (1813–1879), was the nephew of George Smart, a well-known organist and conductor, and the son of another musician. He held various organ appointments in London, and composed much solo music for his instrument, as well as anthems and services; he also wrote numerous songs for one or more voices, a couple of operas, and several cantatas, including *The Bride of Dunkerron*, his best-known work on a large scale.

Henry Hugo Pierson<sup>1</sup> (1815–1873), the son of an Oxford clergyman who afterwards became Dean of Salisbury, was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, and originally intended for the medical profession. He studied music chiefly in Germany, where he became acquainted with Mendelssohn and the other leading composers of the time, including Schumann, who reviewed his songs in the *Neue Zeitschrift* with quite exceptional insight and great friendliness. In 1844 he was appointed to the Reid Professorship at Edinburgh, but he soon resigned the post, and for the rest of his life resided principally in Germany, where his talents were far more appreciated than in his native country. He wrote, indeed, a couple of oratorios, *Jerusalem* and *Hezekiah* (the latter was never quite completed) for the Norwich Festivals

<sup>1</sup> Originally Pearson, but he changed the spelling on taking up his residence in Germany.



of 1852 and 1869; but his other chief works, such as the elaborate music to the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, and his numerous orchestral compositions, were intended primarily for German audiences. In addition to these he wrote operas (two, *Leila* and *Contarini*, were produced at Hamburg in 1848 and 1872 respectively), and a large quantity of songs. His death passed almost unnoticed in England, but called forth noteworthy tributes of admiration from the German press.

Frederick Arthur Gore Ouseley (1825–1889), the son of a distinguished Orientalist and Ambassador to Persia and Russia, was a musician of altogether different type. He was an infant prodigy both as performer and as composer, and all his life through retained remarkable technical facility in various directions; he succeeded Bishop in 1855 as University Professor at Oxford (holding the post till his death), and shortly afterwards founded at his residence, Tenbury in Herefordshire, a large college for the education of boys with special reference to music. His compositions are almost entirely ecclesiastical in character, consisting chiefly of anthems; he also edited the complete sacred music of Gibbons and other collections, and published several theoretical works.

The most prominent early Victorian composer, William Sterndale Bennett (1816–1875) has still to be mentioned. He was the son and grandson of musicians, and began his musical career as a chorister in King's College Chapel at Cambridge; he then studied at the Royal Academy of Music, and in 1836, having even then produced numerous important works that had created a remarkable impression, proceeded to Leipzig, where he became intimately acquainted with both Mendelssohn and Schumann, both of whom expressed the most enthusiastic prophecies of his future. In 1856 he was appointed University Professor at Cambridge, and in 1866 Principal of the Royal Academy of Music, holding both appointments till his death; he was also well known both as pianist and as conductor, and did very much to promote in England the proper appreciation of Bach and other great foreign composers. He wrote nothing for the stage, except incidental music to Sophocles' *Ajax* (dramatic

music very unlike that ordinarily known by that name at the time), but left behind him specimens of all other kinds of composition—a symphony, several concert-overtures, several concertos and a large quantity of solo music for piano, an oratorio, *The Woman of Samaria*, a ‘Pastoral’, *The May Queen*, odes for festival occasions, concerted chamber-music works, and numerous anthems and songs.

By the beginning of the Victorian period the Handelian domination had lost a little of its formerly overpowering weight—the programmes of the Sacred Harmonic Society (founded in 1832) are in this respect much more reasonable than those of the Ancient Concerts; but it nevertheless survived for many more years with very slightly diminished vigour, and is even yet by no means extinct. Perhaps its most marked effect was the establishment, in 1857, of triennial Handel Festivals at the Crystal Palace, consisting of four days’ music performed by a monster chorus and orchestra of several thousand persons; these events have been very popular with the public, but from the musician’s point of view they have done very great harm in encouraging the glorification of mere size, and perpetuating radically false notions of Handel’s artistic methods. Down to 1880 they were conducted by Michael Costa, an Italian of Spanish extraction who came to England in 1829, when quite a youth; for very many years he was the leading conductor in this country, and both at the opera and in the concert-room produced, in spite of his complete insensibility to deeper artistic considerations, notable results in the shape of performances of a disciplined skill quite unknown before.<sup>1</sup>

The main cause of the weakening of the sheer monopoly of Handelian influence was the enormous popularity of Mendelssohn. He visited this country on several occasions, and the fascination of his personal character won him hosts of friends; the first performance of *Elijah* at Birmingham in 1846 was the crowning event of his career, and at his death a year later the English musical world talked as if the sun

<sup>1</sup> It was not, however, till the advent of Hans Richter, in 1877, that English audiences knew what really great conducting meant—as a fine art in addition to all-round musicianship.



had fallen from the sky. For a generation more, after which a steady decline began, Mendelssohnianism remained astonishingly powerful; though it was not long before it became confined—though not to so extreme a degree as in the case of Handelianism—to a comparatively small number of works. To these two dominations all English musicians of serious aims had more or less whole-heartedly to bow the knee, so long as they did not, like Pierson, prefer a voluntary exile; even if here and there individuality declined to be crushed altogether, yet it was by the canons of Handel and Mendelssohn that the English public (even while extending a personal welcome to revolutionary foreigners like Berlioz) inevitably judged all native work, except such as frankly appealed to lower tastes, or, like that of Pearsall, presented virtually no points of contact.

Opera was however, so to speak, a side issue. The English Georgian opera was a mere medley of tunes strung together on the very slenderest (if any) dramatic thread; but the early Victorian period saw the production of several works which, slight as they were, were nevertheless designed with some attention to continuity of interest and propriety of stage effect. Barnett's *The Mountain Sylph* and Loder's *Nourjahad*, both of which came out in 1834, and other quickly succeeding works of Balfe, Macfarren, Wallace, and Julius Benedict (a German who settled in England when a young man, and was prominent in fashionable circles for many years), are all, in their different ways, far more worthy of the name of opera than any works of Bishop and his contemporaries; they have some sort of theatrical *raison d'être*, insignificant as nearly all of them are musically. But in spite of these signs of a more promising future, and occasional performances in English translations of German masterpieces (sometimes also, indeed, given in the original), the status of opera in the native language still remained inferior; popular as individual works of the kind often were, the prestige that is the outcome of fine performance and fashionable support attached almost solely<sup>1</sup> to the exotic Italian opera, which enjoyed its palmiest

<sup>1</sup> Malibran and others of the renowned cosmopolitan singers of the day sometimes, however, sang in English versions of foreign operas.

days in early Victorian times. Though works by English composers, translated into Italian (Balfe's *Il Talismano*, for example) were very occasionally included in the repertoire, and among the crowd of great foreign singers one or two English names may be observed, on English music as such it had hardly any bearing whatever. Still more than is the case nowadays, the vast majority of the audiences went to hear individual singers, without much concern about the music that they sang; the system was a hothouse for 'vocal stars' and all the evils that they bring with them, and on anything like native effort of an individual character it was as purely a deadweight as the influence of Handel or Mendelssohn was in other branches of art. And it had a very long life; from the beginning of the eighteenth century for about a hundred and eighty years onwards Italian was the one and only language of aristocratic opera in England; and then, partly through managerial competition and partly through a growing sense of the absurdity of the whole business, the system, that had for some time been moribund, finally expired. The subsequent revival of foreign opera in a reasonable guise, through the business talents of Augustus Harris, belongs to the following chapter; the principle, on which it is now based, that each work should be performed in its original language, French, German, or Italian, marks an enormous artistic advance, even if—at any rate in the summer season—Covent Garden Theatre still very largely remains, as it was long ago, a sort of after-dinner rendezvous for 'Society'.

We have seen how the figure of Samuel Wesley dominated ecclesiastical music at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and similarly his son Sebastian stands at the head of English church musicians of early Victorian times. Indeed, he is the Anglican composer *par excellence*; unlike his father, he wrote nothing for any other ritual, nor even an oratorio, and his works for any other medium than a church choir with organ accompaniment are almost all artistically quite negligible. But in his own field he was undeniably a very remarkable man; we miss, indeed, in his compositions the grandeur of style visible in the church music of the great past days, clear echoes of which still sounded in the best work



of his father, but, on the other hand, we find in Sebastian Wesley's finest anthems a style which is his own and which has plenty to say for itself. It is unfortunate that a very early work like 'The wilderness' should have, somehow, come to be generally accepted as typical; in spite of its noteworthy picturesqueness and melodic flow, it has a certain vein of rather weak elegance that Wesley afterwards altogether discarded. 'Blessed be the God and Father' is another anthem a good deal below its composer's best level, the popularity of which has perhaps rather hampered the appreciation of his more subtle things; and even the Service in E, though strong, fresh, sincere work, possessing plenty of individuality, also hardly reaches the summit of Wesley's achievement. The long, elaborate 'O Lord, thou art my God' and the pathetic 'Wash me thoroughly' are better examples of what their composer could do; but, though tastes may to some extent differ, many would be inclined to name as the highest the exquisite 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace' and perhaps especially 'Cast me not away'—a short masterpiece of flawless dignity and deep feeling, with a touchingly beautiful close—

No. 96.

*Slow*

That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

The musical score is written for two staves, treble and bass clef, in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Slow'. The melody is in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides harmonic support. The lyrics are: 'That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.' The score includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) at the beginning, *cres.* (crescendo) in the middle, and *dim.* (diminuendo) and *p* (piano) towards the end. The piece concludes with a final cadence.

Sebastian Wesley's best work has indeed an attractiveness all its own. His genius was not capable of taking wide views, and his style is always—using the term in no derogatory sense—somewhat feminine in character; temperate, cultured, devotionality is its aim, and it lives and moves and has its being in the cathedral chancel. But while we are bound to recognize that Sebastian Wesley's music, even at its best, lacks the full measure of that indefinable universal appeal beyond the bounds of race and creed that we find in the work of the great men, and in the handful of best things of his father, yet there is not the least doubt that he is one of the very foremost names in English artistic history in the nineteenth century. Like most composers, he wrote poor music occasionally; but through all the work that is worthy of remembrance we see many fine features—a notable instinct for beautifully polished part-writing, a dignified melodiousness of style, a sense of organic proportion which shows itself in the absence of any triviality of detail, and, above all, a certain innate distinction which, by some turn of phrase or harmony, keeps him on the straight path even when he seems temporarily to be diverging from it. No doubt his music does not appeal to all alike, and it is perhaps with a somewhat conscious effort that some, not in personal sympathy with its composer's temperament, have to realize that it is worth taking on its own terms; but though, as has been said, it is not universal music, it is none the less music that is artistically individual, and the work of a man who in his narrow sphere was a real genius. But the sphere was narrow, and it is singular, indeed, how even the organ is, so to speak, extraneous to it; wherever the accompaniment does more than double the voices it is (except in a mere handful of instances) commonplace in texture. For example, at the passage 'For the Lord hath spoken it' in the anthem 'O Lord thou art my God' the organ, for no ostensible reason, suddenly dashes into eight bars of singularly poor semiquaver scales up and down, which quite ruin an otherwise very fine page; Wesley's feeling for close texture in vocal writing was very remarkable, but, like almost all organ-loft composers between Purcell's day and his own, he had no sort of similar instinct

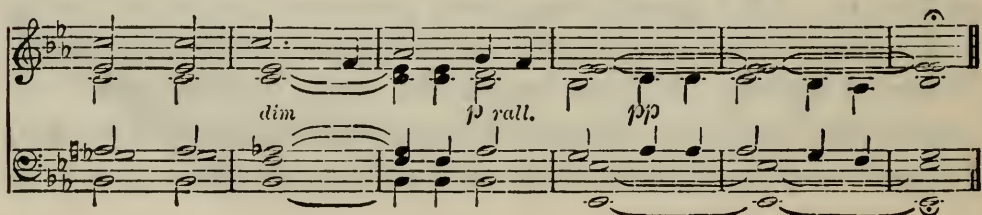
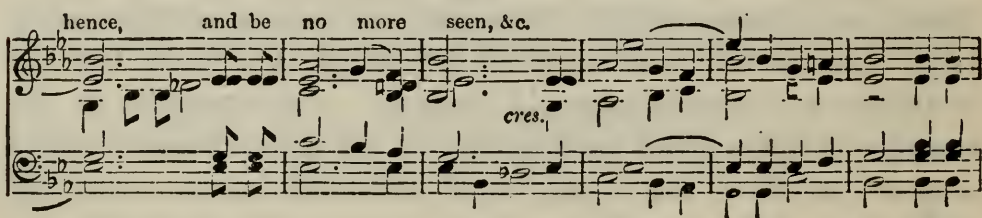
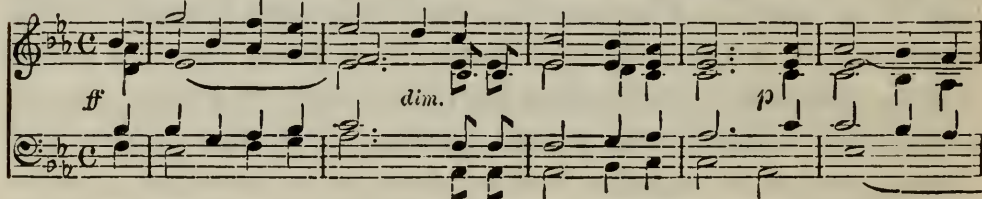


for instrumental writing as such—it was, to him and to all of his school, a mere Cinderella.

Goss, like Wesley, was to all intents and purposes a church musician pure and simple; but he has nothing like the other's individuality of manner. His work is indeed, as a rule, little more than 'organists' music', but it is that on the very highest plane; and through nearly all of it there runs a very agreeable vein of sedately graceful expressiveness joined to solid technical skill. 'The wilderness', 'If we believe that Jesus died', 'Praise the Lord, O my soul', 'Lift up thine eyes', 'Come and let us return', and a good many more are thoroughly musicianly work; their well-ordered paths are not disturbed by any special fire of inspiration, but they deserve and command our sincere respect. Goss did indeed occasionally give way to a somewhat saccharine type of emotionalism, as in 'O Saviour of the world', but the taste is perfectly clean, and the expression is always refined; and if we can point to a good many pages in his works that are merely stiff and commonplace, yet we can, on the other hand, point to some others which attain the level of the permanently remembered things. Perhaps Goss shows himself at his highest in some short anthems comparatively little known; 'Lord, let me know mine end', the close of which may be quoted—

No. 97. *Lento*

O spare me that I may re - cov - er my strength, be - fore I go



is indeed somewhat of a surprise to those who are familiar merely with his ordinary style, and may almost be ranked with the great things of English church music for its solemn beauty and deep and individual impressiveness. But, as a rule, he is the worthy conscientious workman, not the imaginative artist.

T. A. Walmisley was a composer of much the same general type, though he never rose to Goss' highest level. His service in D minor and his anthem 'If the Lord himself had not been on our side' are not marked by very much original distinctiveness, but they are, especially the former, finely massive, dignified work, with a high ideal to which the composer does his best to attain. No doubt he suffers from occasional lapses; the just-named anthem—on the whole both his largest and his best—falls into some rather weak melodiousness in the middle portion, and the well-known short 'Not unto us, O Lord' is a little inclined to sentimentality. But still Walmisley is one of the company of church composers who sought after high things; he never reached greatness, but we cannot but commend his earnest talent. The Evening Service in A of Stephen Elvey (1805-1860), the brother of a better-known and more prolific but less meritorious composer, shows very similar qualities.

Before we pass on to criticize the religious work of the composer who is the most prominent all-round musician of the period, a few words may be given to two men of very different types, who each, in different ways, exercised considerable influence. The anthems of Henry Smart, like his numerous organ-works, achieved and still to some extent hold a great popularity in a wide circle; they can never artistically be ranked higher than pleasing Sunday-school music, usually quite inoffensive and nicely put together, but they are historically interesting as among the earliest of successful attempts to write down to the intelligence of the average church-goer—considerably more worthy, it is true, than some later attempts of similar aim. Ouseley never trod that path, and always wrote with a lofty ideal; but inspiration, or anything approaching thereto, visited him very rarely. His work is massive and sincere, but it is usually very dull; however,



he deserves a word or two of commendation, not only for his excellent technical workmanship, sometimes of a brilliantly elaborate kind, but also for one or two emergences into a really vitalized atmosphere—such as the anthem ‘Is it nothing to you’, which is notably strong, solemn, and beautiful music, and should keep Ouseley’s name in fragrant remembrance when most of his pages are forgotten.

The religious music of Sterndale Bennett consists of eight anthems, a few ‘sacred duets’ and hymn-tunes, and the oratorio *The Woman of Samaria*; some of the anthems, such as ‘O that I knew where I might find him’, are melodiously expressive, without, however, possessing the distinguishing features of the best church compositions of Goss or Sebastian Wesley, but by common consent the oratorio is Bennett’s most typical work in the ecclesiastical field. We shall shortly have an opportunity of considering his other music; and we shall indeed find that—as with the work of his master and overwhelming influencer, Mendelssohn—his best religious pages never rise to anything like the artistic height of his best secular. We shall see later ample evidence of Bennett’s talents; but *The Woman of Samaria* gives us little assistance in our search. Apart from a few things, such as the last chorus ‘And blessed be the Lord God of Israel’, the work is indeed decorously dead; the libretto is totally lacking in any artistic vitality, and nearly all the music is similarly steeped in conventionalism. It is refined in its feeble way, but, curiously enough, even Bennett’s technique fails him more or less; the elementary dull devices of the opening chorale-chorus are as unlike Bach’s methods (with which they have sometimes, astoundingly, been compared) as anything can be, and, indeed, the whole work is a sad legacy from the mature pen of the young genius who had written the *Naiads* overture more than thirty years before. Bennett is indeed the great instance in music of a man who might have reached real greatness being slowly but very effectually killed by his environment.

Macfarren’s oratorios are of slightly later date, but they still belong essentially to the early Victorian period; in them the Handelian influence, which is almost invisible with

Bennett, again makes itself felt, though Mendelssohn is still the primary force. His *St. John the Baptist*, which was enthusiastically welcomed as a great masterpiece when produced at the Bristol Festival of 1873, may fitly be taken as a type; the anthems and the other oratorios show the same qualities with hardly an exception. We see an obvious desire to be dramatic and up-to-date; the overture, we are told, 'represents the state of expectation which preceded the Advent', and the 'Shofar' or trumpet-call at the beginning of the overture, followed by what serves for the chief subject—a very elementary quaver-phrase in C minor—comes again, with a few bars of the quavers in the major key, just at the end of the last chorus, at the words 'until the day should dawn, and the daystar arise'. Indeed, the oratorio sometimes shows a sort of childlike dramatic characterization that would hardly have been possible to a composer possessing any sense of humour; and throughout Macfarren's tentative modernities are pathetically ineffectual. He can do what, in its way, is quite admirable academic work, such as the clever fugue on the old 'Hanover' tune; but otherwise the oratorio is a mere tissue of innocent, respectable commonplaces. And yet, as we shall shortly see, some of Macfarren's secular music shows that he had real blood in his veins; somehow it seems to have been a sort of point of honour with him (as with many others) to set religious words to dull platitudes.

Pierson's oratorios represent, however, a cross-current, though they are in no sort of way so revolutionary as other works by him, to which we shall come later. *Jerusalem* and *Hezekiah* owe next to nothing to either Handel or Mendelssohn; there are a few occasional traces of Spohr, as in the quintet 'Blessed are the dead' in *Jerusalem*, but, as a rule, Pierson shows all the independence of the bold but somewhat ignorant amateur. He has plenty of ideas, but no sort of technical mastery; his command over vocal part-writing is, on the whole, very poor compared with the average academic contemporary work, fine phrases come to untimely and entirely unnecessary ends, and the whole style is a singular mixture of earnest idealism and uneducated unorthodoxy. He has an exceptional fondness for instrumental writing as such—witness, in *Jerusalem*, the long



overture, or the long instrumental symphony 'representing the march of the Romans against Jerusalem' (a very angular march indeed), or the long curious 'recitando con affetto' for violoncellos, absolutely *solì*, at the words 'this is the second death'; and altogether his figure is very much out of place in early Victorian England. But the oratorios contain, in spite of their crudity as wholes, some striking work; the chorus 'Holy, holy, holy' in *Jerusalem* has a fine austere atmosphere about it, and other things also are notable, but Pierson can hardly ever get through a complete movement without a lapse of expression or technique somewhere. Had he known what to do with his ideas, he would have been one of the really remarkable English composers; as it is, he remains an isolated figure of ineffectual revolt.

All through this period English opera was artistically very much on the down grade, even if dramatically, as we have seen, there was a certain improvement on the traditions hallowed by the successes of men like Bishop, in virtue of which opera had been a sort of third-rate theatrical medley, totally devoid alike of art and of sense. True, a work like Loder's *The Night Dancers* has glimpses of something better; in the middle of much that is altogether commonplace there is occasionally something that has a certain stylishness and character of its own, something that, altogether elementary though it be, has yet a touch of individuality of a kind. But mid-Victorian opera is mainly represented by the work of Balfe, a fragment of which lingers still; *The Bohemian Girl* has even now not quite lost all its popular attraction for certain tastes, and it may be confessed that perhaps on the whole one might do worse. Artistically it is not worth a moment's consideration—the tunes are empty beyond expression, and there is not a particle of any workmanship to carry them off; yet there is nothing worse than emptiness, and the rubbish is quite unpretentious and decent. Highly-coloured vulgarity is a later development to which Balfe gives no countenance; we go to sleep over his middle-class tawdry melodies, but we are not actively irritated by them. No doubt in his day Balfe was thought a great man; he strove to rival the favourite Italian operas, and wrote in the fashionable bravura style for

the prima donnas—Elvira's part in *The Rose of Castille* is technically as difficult as any soprano music in existence. But it is all artistically dead beyond the very faintest hope of resurrection; and we need not feel any cause for lament. Balfe, however, was the best of his particular type; the *Lurline* and *Maritana* of Vincent Wallace, which (especially the latter) long rivalled *The Bohemian Girl* in popularity, are considerably poorer, and indeed advance a good many steps on the road to sheer vulgarity, though of a good-natured and unpretending order. Barnett's *The Mountain Sylph*, the general influence of which seems visible also in Macfarren's stage works, was no doubt artistically more ambitious, and tried to strike out a less superficially attractive line; but the whole, in spite of a good deal of well-wrought and pleasant music (much of that sung by the Sylphs, and also of that sung by the malignant supernaturals, has a considerable amount of point and invention), was far too mild and ineffectual to create any real permanent life for English opera.

Pierson's lengthy incidental music to *Faust* is marked by altogether different methods, and it is plain that his ideal was artistically far higher than that of most of his contemporary countrymen. The scene of Ariel and the Fairy Chorus, with its delightful opening tune—

No. 98.

*Allegretto*

Wann der Blü - then Früh - lings - Re - gen

ü - ber al - les schwe - bend sinkt &c.



the very delicate and graceful scene of Euphorion, the vigorous song of Lynceus, and plenty of things in the final chain of choruses—all these are well worthy of close attention ; though it must be confessed that the frequent pages of sheer amateurish incoherence are decidedly irritating, and would prevent any enterprising lover of Pierson's talent from attempting to revive the work as a whole.

The cantata was an art-form increasingly popular throughout mid-Victorian times, though virtually unknown before ; due in its origin to the rapid growth of small choral societies, it became a favourite medium for the expression of a sort of mild romanticism—a flavour of the stage tempered by the respectability of the concert-room. With later composers the idea was developed in different and more promising forms ; in its early emasculate guise, the cantata offered little or no scope for really living artistic work. Bennett's *The May Queen*, to a singularly ridiculous 'drawing-room' libretto by H. F. Chorley, is the most familiar and indeed probably the best example of the type ; but it is very innocent and obvious all through. Robin Hood's bass solo ' 'Tis jolly to hunt' does indeed bring into this atmosphere of a boarding-school prize-giving a whiff of fresh air from the woods : but the relief is only temporary. Not that there is not a good deal of delicate if commonplace refinement about *The May Queen*, but the whole thing is respectably lifeless ; and such a very watery romanticism is perhaps worse than none at all. Macfarren's *Songs in a Cornfield*—a cantata for female voices—is a work of more or less the same kind, though less pretentious ; it has been acclaimed as his best production, but its refined melodious futilities have gone down into the dust already. Music without some sort of lifeblood in it has singularly little chance of passing beyond the circle of friendly sympathizers to which it makes its first appeal ; *The May Queen* is inclined to outstay her welcome, but it is after all only the music of the disreputable character that enables the work occasionally to be heard. And almost all the rest of the cantatas of the time are now unknown even by name ; while no one who has turned over their dusty pages wishes to revive them.

On the other hand, the unaccompanied secular vocal music of the time contains, among much that is ordinary, some really fine work. Pearsall—certainly the best English writer of such music since the madrigalian period—left behind him some notable gems, mixed up, unfortunately, with much of an inferior kind. In the vein of the pure part-song, as distinguished from the madrigal, Pearsall is virtually negligible: clean as they are, things like ‘The hardy Norseman’<sup>1</sup> or ‘O who will o’er the downs’ come to little or nothing. But when he gives free play to his love for the Elizabethans, the result is altogether different; it is true that sometimes (the six-part ‘Light of my soul’ is a specially good instance) we see that the giant’s robe does not quite fit, and anyhow there remains something indefinable about the great madrigalians of the past which eludes the imitation even of a brilliantly clever disciple like Pearsall—certainly the cleverest who has ever lived. But still, all allowances made, Pearsall’s best madrigals are exceedingly musicianly and vitalized work, with a very real air of distinction about them. ‘Sing we and chaunt it’<sup>2</sup> and ‘No, no, Nigella’ have an almost Morleyan brightness and swing: and ‘Take heed, ye shepherd swains’, ‘Down in a garden fair’, ‘Let us all go maying’, ‘Why do the roses’, and a good many others, are most agreeable in their polished solid technique and their frank individual melody. Occasionally, indeed, Pearsall can become really massive and something like great, as in ‘Lay a garland’ (a most beautiful stately thing), ‘Great God of love’, or ‘O ye roses’, the beginning of which may be quoted:—

No. 99.

*Moderato*

O ye ros - es so bloom - ing and fair, O ye ros - es, go

<sup>1</sup> The composer says the tune of this is an ‘ancient popular song’—considerably modernized, in all probability.

<sup>2</sup> Published both in an eight-part and in a four-part form; the former is far the more effective.



hide your blu - . . shes, O ye ro - ses,

*cres.*

hide your blush - . . es, go droop in des-

*f*

- pair; For Flo - ra is com - ing, my shep - herd - ess true, and

*dim.* *p* *V.*  
*IV.*

she is a thousand times fair - er than you,

*IV.*

and she . . . . . is, and she . . . . . is a

thou . . . . sand times fair - er than you. . . . .

*&c.*

It is true that, as has been said, we perhaps feel just a faint touch of conscious antiquarianism about such work as this; but still it is singularly living and imaginative, and incalculably

more musical than anything the average English composer of the time could produce—fully as musical indeed as anything since Purcell. Not indeed that good work is altogether absent from the mass of glees and part-songs of the period; the slight but pleasant talent of Hatton, for example, is seen to advantage in such things as ‘April showers,’ ‘Summer eve,’ ‘Spring, ye flowrets’ and others of the same type—agreeably tuneful, effectively written, and harmonically clean, if occasionally a little sugary. Walmisley’s charming ‘Sweete floweres, ye were too faire’, various things of Goss, and especially some very interesting Shakespearian part-songs of Macfarren—work that possesses undoubted vitality—are also worthy of mention as honourable survivors of an undistinguished crowd; but even they would not, in a period of greater really artistic fecundity, take an outstanding position. Pearsall’s best works, however, are very well worthy to be remembered on their own merits, as but little early or mid-Victorian music is.

In solo vocal music the period can boast of hardly anything worthy of even a distant comparison with the finest works of Pearsall. Reams of the kind of music that is very fairly represented by such things as Balfe’s once famous ‘The arrow and the song’ were more or less conscientiously turned out; but it is virtually all mere waste paper. A few things, however, rise above the average level, and may deserve brief notice: Hatton’s ‘To Anthea’, for example, is (though it has been greatly overrated) quite pleasant, cleanly-written work. The songs of Loder present a somewhat curious problem; many of them are very distinctly commonplace or worse, but occasionally he could attain something much higher. ‘Robin Hood is lying dead’ has a good sort of folk-tune swing about it, as well as considerable pathos; and ‘The brooklet’<sup>1</sup> (a setting of a translation of the words of Müller familiar by Schubert’s ‘Wohin’) is a solitary, but very real, masterpiece—exquisitely polished in detail and full of melodic distinction—

<sup>1</sup> From a set of twelve songs published by subscription; it seems, strangely enough, never to have been reprinted, as many of Loder’s others have been.



No. 100.

I heard . . . a brook - let gush - ing . . .

*p*

From its rock - y foun - tain near . . .

Down in - to the val - ley rush - ing . . .

So fresh and won - drous clear,

*cres.* *f*

so won - drous clear

*dim.* *p* &c.

But this, which might indeed not be in the very least ashamed of comparison with the standard classical songs of

the same type, is merely a single (and indeed, compared with Loder's average work, an almost unbelievable) effort; and to judge its composer by it would be to do him an honour of which he is very far from worthy. Yet Bennett, a musician of far finer general calibre than Loder, produced no song that is anything like its equal; 'Maydew' and others of the same graceful, easy style are pleasant enough, but their somewhat diluted Mendelssohnianism does not come to very much. And Bennett's songs show a dreary quantity of mere respectable sentiment; the sugariness is clean, but it very soon palls on the taste, and there is hardly any sign of the distinction that marks some of the instrumental work. Heine seen through English mid-Victorian spectacles, as in Bennett's setting of 'Mädchen mit dem rothen Mündchen', is by no means a specially attractive vision.

Pierson wrote a large number of songs to both English and German words, but here again we meet with disappointment: his setting of Tennyson's 'Claribel'—undoubtedly his best song—has some extremely beautiful and delicate bits of melody, but it is, as a whole, incommensurate. The lyrical gift was indeed denied to Pierson; and his attempts to deal with concentrated emotion such as inspires the words of 'Take, O take those lips away', or 'O wert thou in the cauld cauld blast', or 'My love's like the red red rose', are overdone and theatrical. His dramatic ballads, again, in spite of plenty of real musical feeling, are always exaggerated and inclined to degenerate into rhapsodical dullness; as in his instrumental work, he never, with all his original talent, produces anything really 'four-square without blame'. But still he shows sparks of the real fire of inspiration; and somewhat dim though they may be, they are brilliant compared with the microscopic glimmer which is all of which wellnigh every other mid-Victorian song-writer, when at his highest level, can boast.

There was a great dearth of instrumental music at this period; indeed, apart from that of Bennett and the historically interesting work of Pierson, none demands even passing notice, though occasional symphonies and overtures came from the pens of composers who were much more at home in their organ-lofts or their lecture-rooms, and every now and then, as



in a remarkable organ prelude in F sharp minor by Ouseley, we find really imaginative work in the middle of a dreary waste. Bennett, however, showed his talents at their best in instrumental music, though all his finest pieces are early in date. The C minor pianoforte concerto, with its earnestness and structural finish, the polished and thoughtful *Parisina* overture, and, most noteworthy of all, the remarkably beautiful overture entitled *The Naiads*—

No. 101.  
*Allegro moderato*  
 Wind.

Violins (wind sustain same chord throughout).

*pp*

*molto legato*  
 Viola.

Bassi. pizz.

V'cello.

Fl. and Cl.

Viola and Fags.

&c.

were all written before he was twenty-one; the *Woodnymph* overture—a companion to *The Naiads*, and though hardly equal in fascination still a work of unusual promise—the F minor pianoforte concerto, with its charming Barcarolle, and the very graceful watercolour sketches for pianoforte known

as *The Lake*, *The Millstream*, and *The Fountain* are also quite youthful works; and it is no cause for wonder that both Mendelssohn and Schumann warmly heralded the coming of a new genius out of the dark West. The former overflowed with affectionate admiration,<sup>1</sup> and the latter, besides pouring out sincere praise in the *Neue Zeitschrift*, dedicated his *Études Symphoniques* to the young Englishman, and in the finale utilized, in a playfully delicate manner all his own, an air from Marschner's opera *Der Templer und die Jüdin*, where England is bidden to rejoice in the prowess of her knights; but the composer whose career began with such brilliant auspices soon lost his early freshness of genius. Even in his first review, Schumann noted the great strength of Mendelssohn's influence; later on he regretfully confessed that Bennett could only do one particular kind of thing, and that his talent was becoming mere mannerism. And even in his one special vein he never recovered his early fertility of invention; the 'Fantasie-Overture' on Moore's *Paradise and the Peri* has charming passages, but it is certainly not as a whole equal to *The Naiads*, and the G minor Symphony, though starting with a movement that has a good deal of polished grace, greatly declines in interest afterwards. Again, the pianoforte pieces practically never show again the stylishness, slight though it be, of the early *Three Musical Sketches*, to which reference has already been made; the Toccata and the Rondeau à la Polonaise have their points, but they are mere reflections of a vanishing talent. It is indeed easy to overrate the promise of the early works; though the Mendelssohnian influence is not so strong as altogether to overburden the delicate, rather shy refinement which was Bennett's own endowment, yet we can see that something more robust was necessary to secure the really outstanding artistic position in European music which his friends prophesied for him. The pages are rather too much tinged with rosewater; but still the beautiful finish of the phrasing, the fastidious avoidance of anything even remotely coarse or heavy, the highbred

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the testimonial he sent when Bennett was competing for the Edinburgh Professorship in 1843 (quoted in full in the article on Mendelssohn in Grove's Dictionary).



grace and charm—all these were sufficiently different from the general run of English music of the time to give rise to very great hopes. And though the restricted outlook was obvious even at the start, yet this was a negligible fault in the work of one who was little more than a boy; the foundation was ready, but nothing worth mentioning was ever built upon it—the polished charm degenerated into gentlemanly commonplace, the limpid technique into stereotyped dryness. Like Mendelssohn, Bennett had derived his pianoforte writing from the Clementi-Hummel school, and ultimately from harpsichord music like that of Domenico Scarlatti, though adding elements of his own; the rapid surface glitter of his finger-passages, for which a sort of immaculately neat emotionless precision is the main requisite, is somewhat trying for the ordinary modern pianist, who thinks mainly of such things as tone-colour or richness of sound; and in his later works he subsists, as a rule, almost entirely on such subdued brilliance of effect, and moves uneasily in slower tempi, where there is more time for his attenuated inventiveness to make itself felt. But a certain sort of musicianly pride which Bennett retained, even in his weaker moods, prevented him from ever yielding to mere display, and consequently almost all his pianoforte music has fallen, as it were, between two stools; there is not enough intellectual or emotional content for the pianist who is not specially interested in technique as such, and the average pianist who is so interested prefers music that, while being less difficult, sounds more so. Bennett was indeed a classicist in his failings as well as in his virtues, and he carried his classicism even into his excursions into the field of programme-music; both the pianoforte sonata *The Maid of Orleans* and the greatly superior orchestral overture *Paradise and the Peri* are plentifully labelled with quotations calculated to impress the special poetic content on the listener, but the composer does his very best to retain the orthodox structural schemes, which sometimes conflict oddly with the necessities of the narrative. The early overtures are merely ‘mood-music’ after the pattern of Mendelssohn’s, and not, in the strict sense, programme-music at all; *Paradise and the Peri*, however, eminently restrained though it is in style,

is in essence—with its ticketed themes and its triangle-bell—an adventuress, of unwontedly shy and refined mien, into the domain of Berlioz and Liszt.

It is interesting to compare this delicately timid modernity with the orchestral work of Bennett's contemporary Pierson, whose vocal compositions we have already described; the *Romeo and Juliet* concert-overture, the *Macbeth* symphonic poem, and all the rest seem now indeed as unknown in their composer's adopted country as in that of his birth, but historically they are somewhat notable. In speaking of Pierson's other works, we have remarked his defiant rejection of the Handelian and Mendelssohnian traditions of the England of his day, and his incorrigible amateurishness of technique; but the music to *Faust*, violently opposed to the orthodox classical traditions though it is, is yet hardly so revolutionary as *Macbeth*, which to the typical English composer of the period must have seemed like a nightmare. Pierson's model seems to be Berlioz, but he has even less steadiness of method than that wayward genius, and far less technical ability; these curious works are designed (if one can use the word design at all in connexion with them) in a style that is throughout incoherently formless, there is no thematic invention to speak of, and the sections jostle each other with no sort of intelligible sequence of idea. *Macbeth* is full of quotations from Shakespeare (in German) written over various passages, but they come to very little; we have the witches represented by a sort of dialogue between a trombone (labelled 'first witch'), a clarinet ('second witch') and a cornet ('third witch'), with accompaniment for double basses *tremolando* in three parts—a purely Berliozian effect—we have marches for the Scotch and English armies (singularly alike in general character), a witches' dance, banqueting music, and many other things all mixed up anyhow, and poetically labelled right and left—all the last pages have quotations from the play every few bars. But there is no actuality about it all; it tries to be dramatically bloodcurdling, but only succeeds in being, as a rule, respectably dull. There is a great deal of elaborate emotional indication, such as *con espansione*, *calando sempre più dolcissimo ed appassionato*, and so on, and many ingenious colour effects quite after Berlioz's models



(cymbals *solì*, &c.), the scoring being unusually complicated, and not at all unimpressive; indeed Pierson is in very many ways a sort of early Richard Strauss, using unrevolutionary harmony but otherwise altogether 'emancipated' from classical leading-strings—far more so indeed than Strauss, as Pierson seems to have a sovereign contempt for structural technique of any kind. And yet this queer stuff has many signs of a dim but notable talent that might have blossomed into something really great had Pierson received from his countrymen a little sympathy and kindly discipline, instead of blank stares combined with objurgation. The sombrely expressive end of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, shows, in its vague uncertain way, glimmerings of something much deeper than Bennett, with his facile acceptance of things, ever reached; though there can indeed be no doubt that Pierson's muddled amateurishness contrasts extremely badly with the other's polished skill. Nearly every one would listen to Bennett's orchestral writings much rather than to Pierson's; but to the student of artistic psychology the latter is on the whole the most interesting figure of mid-Victorian music.

A word or two may perhaps be given to a composer not hitherto mentioned, Francis Edward Bache (1833–1858), a pupil of Bennett; in his brief life of ill-health he succeeded in creating on his friends an altogether exceptional impression, traces of which still linger. It is hard, however, to see in his published works—a trio for piano and strings is still occasionally heard—more than a very mild and undistinguished talent; but there is no doubt that his technical musicianship was decidedly above the average of his time, and he might, had he lived, have done something to justify what to us seems an altogether too partial laudation due to the influence of his enthusiastic personality.

## CHAPTER XI

### LATER VICTORIAN MUSIC

IN this chapter biographical details will naturally divide into two classes, of composers who are dead and of those who are still with us, and are indeed yet, one and all, in the enjoyment of their full powers. Among the deceased composers the most prominent name is that of Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900), probably the most widely popular English composer who has ever lived. The son of a military band-master, he began his musical career as a chorister of the Chapel Royal, which he quitted for the Royal Academy and still later for the Leipzig Conservatorium; after returning to England in 1862 he held occasional organ and conducting appointments, and was Principal of the National Training School of Music from 1876 to 1881, but devoted himself chiefly to composition, producing a large number of works, including examples of every department except instrumental chamber-music. The numerous light operas which he wrote in conjunction with W. S. Gilbert met one and all with exceptional success, not only in England but also in America and Australia: and it is by these and a certain number of detached songs that his name is most widely familiar. His junior, Arthur Goring Thomas (1850-1892) began the study of music somewhat late in life, working at Paris and afterwards at the Royal Academy in London: his operas *Esmeralda* and *Nadeshda* are his most important works, but he also produced many non-dramatic pieces, including several cantatas and a large number of songs, chiefly to French words. Among other deceased late Victorian composers the names may be mentioned of John Stainer (1840-1901), organist of Magdalen College, Oxford and St. Paul's Cathedral, and University Professor at Oxford, and Joseph Barnby (1838-1896), organist of Eton College and Principal of the Guildhall School of Music, who, with the older John



Bacchus Dykes (1823–1876), precentor of Durham Cathedral, were the leaders of an influential school of anthem and hymn-writers.

Reasons have been given in the preface for not mentioning by name more than five living composers—Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (b. 1847), Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (b. 1848), Frederic Hymen Cowen (b. 1852), Charles Villiers Stanford (b. 1852), and Edward Elgar (b. 1857). Mackenzie, the eldest of this quintet, is a native of Edinburgh, and studied at the Royal Academy in London; for some years he followed the calling of a violinist in a German orchestra, and subsequently resided for some time at Florence. Since his return to England his chief occupation, apart from his compositions, has been his principalship of the Royal Academy, to which he was elected in 1888; he also for several years conducted the Philharmonic and other important concerts. He has not latterly shown himself so prolific a composer as in his younger days, and even then his output was not very large; but he has nevertheless produced a considerable quantity of music in several of the most important branches. Among his chief vocal works are the oratorio *The Rose of Sharon*, the operas *Colomba* and *The Troubadour*, and the cantatas *The Story of Sayid* and *The Dream of Jubal*; his numerous orchestral compositions do not, however, include any work on a symphonic scale, and, except for an early quartet for piano and strings, he has neglected concerted chamber-music.

Parry did not adopt the musical profession until after some time spent in other pursuits, and he was never attached as a student to any musical institution; but he has been a fertile composer ever since his Eton days. Till rather past his thirtieth year he devoted himself chiefly to concerted chamber-music; but though a few similar works of later date have seen the light, and he has also produced some symphonies and other important orchestral compositions, his mature activities have been directed mainly towards choral forms. *Prometheus Unbound* (a setting of portions of Shelley's poem), written for the Gloucester Festival of 1880, was the earliest work in which his real *métier* was displayed: settings of Shirley's *The Glories of our Blood and State*, and of Milton's *Blest Pair of Sirens*,

followed in 1883 and 1887 respectively, and since then Parry has brought out a practically continuous stream of choral works either definitely sacred or what might perhaps be called 'ethical' in character—among the principal of which may be mentioned the oratorios *Judith*, *Job*, and *King Saul*, settings of the 'Te Deum' and the 130th Psalm, *St. Cecilia's Day*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *The Lotus-Eaters*, *A Song of Darkness and Light*, *Invocation to Music*, *Ode to Music*, and, more recently, *War and Peace*, *Voces Clamantium*, and *The Love that casteth out Fear*. Besides his very numerous compositions, both in these large and also in smaller shapes such as songs, Parry has found time for various literary works of very high value—the chief of which are 'The Evolution of the Art of Music' and a 'History of Music during the seventeenth century'; moreover, he has been Director of the Royal College of Music since 1894, and in 1900 succeeded Stainer as University Professor of Music at Oxford.

Cowen is a West Indian by birth, but received his musical education at Leipzig. His 'Scandinavian' symphony (1880) was the first work to give him a prominent position, though he had been known both as composer and as pianist for a considerable time previously; his powers have since been shown in several other symphonies as well as numerous other orchestral works, three operas *Thorgrim*, *Signa*, and *Harold*, numerous oratorios and cantatas, of which a setting of Collins' *Ode to the Passions* (1898) is perhaps the chief, and a very large quantity of solo songs, while he has also been for many years one of the prominent conductors of England.

Stanford was born in Dublin, but in 1870 removed to Cambridge, which has since been a chief centre of his influence, formerly as organist of Trinity College and afterwards as University Professor of Music, a post that he still holds in conjunction with the principal Professorship of Composition at the Royal College of Music and various important conductorships. Of all the composers of the English Renaissance he has been the most versatile, as well as perhaps the most prolific. Besides very numerous instrumental compositions, both chamber and orchestral, including several symphonies, he has produced a considerable quantity of music for the stage, his



two latest operas, *Shamus O'Brien* (a 'singspiel' after the older model, with spoken dialogue), and *Much Ado about Nothing*, being the most important; his choral works include two oratorios, *The Three Holy Children* and *Eden*, a 'Mass', a 'Requiem', and a 'Te Deum', and many secular pieces, such as, amongst others, an *Elegiac Ode* (Whitman), *The Revenge* and *The Voyage of Maeldune* (both Tennyson), *The Last Post* (Henley), besides a large quantity of church music and part- and solo songs.

Edward Elgar, a native of Worcester, is a unique example of a composer who is, virtually, altogether self-taught; he has preferred to live outside the whirl of the recognized musical circles, and has held no official position of any importance except the recently conferred university professorship at Birmingham. Till about his fortieth year he was but little known, and his fame rests on a very few productions: the oratorios *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900), *The Apostles* (1903), and its sequel *The Kingdom* (1906) are the chief of these, and his other mature works include a set of orchestral variations and an overture *In the South*, besides an 'Introduction and Allegro' for string orchestra and a handful of songs for one or more voices.

It was only during the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century that the Renaissance of English composition gradually grew from more to more; but in other departments of music signs of the new order were visible at an earlier date. In 1855 August Manns (1825-1907) started at the Crystal Palace a lifetime's work that has had a great and most beneficial influence; not only did he first introduce to English audiences the orchestral compositions of Schubert and Schumann and many more,<sup>1</sup> but it is to him, foreigner though he was by blood, that nearly all our principal living composers owe their first public encouragement. Manns' labours were ably seconded by George Grove, for many years Secretary to the Crystal Palace Company, and subsequently the first Director of the Royal College of Music (who was also the real inventor of the

<sup>1</sup> It is not at all infrequent now to see works inadvertently announced as 'first time in England' which were heard at the Crystal Palace a generation ago.

analytical programme, and the editor of the first complete Musical Dictionary in the English language); and in the field of chamber-music the St. James' Hall Popular Concerts, started in 1859, did a great work in familiarizing the English public with the finest renderings of all the classical masterpieces (though it was no part of their manager's scheme to make experiments or to do anything for native composers), and, from 1848 onwards, Charles Hallé did valiant service in a similar direction, in London and the North of England. Of late years (largely owing to the enthusiastic labours of Henry J. Wood at the Queen's Hall) the popularity of orchestral concerts has increased so much that it distinctly threatens to silence the quieter appeal of chamber-music; but in spite of this very regrettable fact, nothing shows better the enormous advance in musical appreciation than a comparison of the programmes of a 'Promenade Concert' at Queen's Hall to-day and of its parallel a generation ago, when the Crystal Palace had a virtual monopoly of symphonic music in or near London. In vocal music, however, the revival came somewhat later. The older generation of living solo singers has not felt to any appreciable extent the same pressure towards the universal choice of high-class music which is becoming every year more and more weighty; it is only the younger singers who feel obliged to render at least an outward homage to the ideal which has long ruled in the instrumental field. In choral music, again, it is only comparatively recently that we have recognized that something more than mere military drilling is necessary in modern technique; and the new era of opera is altogether little more than twenty years old. But in every department, plentiful as are the opportunities for deeper culture that still remain, the advance that has coincided with the renaissance of composition has been very remarkable; an English-born and home-staying musician has now a position of perfect artistic equality with his continental colleague.

Again, we can see in the teaching world how the old Royal Academy was awakened to a new existence by the establishment of the Royal College in 1882, and how they, with other institutions and individual teachers, have moved with the times in raising the average quality of the music taught to



young people—distant even yet as is the goal. And we cannot pass by the Tonic Sol-fa movement,<sup>1</sup> which has had enormous influence in diffusing elementary musical knowledge among certain classes of the community; it has indeed been often greatly hampered by a quite unnecessary connexion with musicianship of the very poorest kind, but freed from these shackles and taken for what it is worth—merely an easy means to the end which all musicians have in common, and not a sort of panacea that can afford to dispense with the one universal language of the staff notation—it should do a lasting work in English music. The ‘People’s Concert Society’ (founded in 1878) and others of similar aims have done finely artistic work in the poorer quarters of London, and the more recent Competitive Festivals have very greatly fostered good music in provincial districts; indeed, though (as we shall see in the next chapter) the wide diffusion of music among relatively uneducated persons has often had the great drawback of extinguishing the memory for traditional folk-songs, yet it has proved—what we ought to have known before—that artistic appreciation is quite independent of social distinctions, and that there is no sort of foundation for the pernicious doctrine that it is ever necessary for a musician to sing or play down to the supposed level of any audience in existence. And simultaneously the musician himself has become far less narrowly professional, far more interested in the whole wide world of intellect and art; a hundred years ago he was far more alien to his average cultured fellowman than he is to-day, and the change is all for the good.<sup>2</sup>

So far as the concert-room forms are affected, the new course of English composition has progressed steadily onwards, and no special individual features are noticeable: plenty of very inferior work, especially vocal, has no doubt been written, but still the standard of musicianship expected has gradually and firmly been rising for the last quarter of a century, and the ground under our feet is now perfectly

<sup>1</sup> The Association was founded in 1853, the College in 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Of course there is the danger, which some of our best composers have not altogether escaped, of giving to work, which others might do equally well, very valuable time which might be spent in perfecting one’s own special endowment.

solid. But there are two departments—opera and church music—the history of each of which has exhibited traits not visible elsewhere, except in a quite slight and unimportant degree.

Opera has ramified in several directions. There is the 'Grand Opera' of the cosmopolitan type, with foreign conductors and chiefly foreign singers, to obtain whom Europe and America are scoured year by year; to it we owe the maintenance of what as a rule is a distinctly high level of performance, though the excessive prices often charged are prohibitive to very many of the music-lovers who would be the best appreciators. This new régime may be said to have taken its rise from the productions of German operas in 1882 and 1884, though it was not till 1887 that it was firmly established; it has had the drawback of reviving the old type of fashionably ill-mannered audience that during the decay of operatic fortunes was very little in evidence, and is now totally extinct in any public place except a theatre,<sup>1</sup> but nevertheless, in spite of the vagaries of its arbiters, it has done a great deal (especially by the popularization of the later works of Wagner) to broaden taste and to help on the general movement of the Renaissance. Until recently the season only lasted for some three months in the year; but lately, under different managements, foreign opera has been nearly continuously given. For English composers the Covent Garden Grand Opera has, however, done very little; a few works have been performed once or twice, and then have been pusillanimously dropped out of the repertoire for good and all. But as early as 1875 the Carl Rosa Company (the venture of a German violinist who had married a brilliant singer<sup>2</sup>), after some years in America, started to give operas in London, performing all the works in English and getting together the best native talent

<sup>1</sup> It is a sheer mystery why any serious-minded English composer should, save under the greatest pressure, undergo the heart-breaking experience of writing incidental music (with conversation *obbligato*) for stage plays; exiguous as is the musical conscience of the fashionable opera-goer, that of the fashionable or unfashionable habitué of non-operatic theatres is a purely minus quantity.

<sup>2</sup> Mme. Parepa-Rosa died, however, before the London performances commenced.



that could be procured ; a considerable number of operas by English composers were commissioned and brought to a first hearing under its auspices, but after the death of its founder, in 1889, it became overshadowed by the revival of cosmopolitan opera, and turned its attention from London to the provinces, where it still does good work. The Moody-Manners Company, of more recent date, shares with it the labours of producing the standard operas, also in English, for the benefit of music-lovers outside London ; it has also, of late years, given several seasons in the metropolis. As for the 'English Opera House' in London, specially built and opened with a flourish of trumpets in 1891, it merely performed Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* till the public was tired, then diverged to an opera by a French composer, and directly afterwards acknowledged its failure, and became an ordinary music-hall.

But it is in a department of stage music untouched by the directors of either the cosmopolitan or the purely English opera that the greatest success—whatever artistic worth may attach to it—has been won. Since the days of Shield and his contemporaries, English light opera had gradually drifted downhill till all relics of even the faintest musical culture vanished ; but the great vogue of Offenbach's Parisian operettas in the fifties and sixties suggested to a theatrical conductor of the name of German Reed the foundation of stage entertainments with music that should appeal to a different class of audience. These prospered for many years, and it was to them that Sullivan (whose *Box and Cox*, written and first produced two years earlier, was revived under Reed's auspices in 1869) owed the beginnings of his popular success ; Frederic Clay (1838–1889), some of whose work (more especially that of earlier date) is of quite pleasant quality in its kind, was also brought to light through this channel. Throughout the seventies and eighties Sullivan, with the admirable assistance of W. S. Gilbert as his librettist, poured forth at the Savoy Theatre a continuous stream of light operas, nearly all of which were received with unbounded applause ; and though those subsequently produced with other collaborators did not attain the same popular success, the general musical type remained unchanged. But in this field, and in this alone, English music

has now gone backwards instead of forwards. These works, and contemporary imitations from the less able pens of Alfred Cellier and Edward Solomon, really created a new sort of audience, able to pronounce a financially very weighty verdict, but possessing very little artistic discrimination; and their legitimate if, as a rule (especially in the matter of libretti), decidedly inferior descendants are seen now in the flood of 'musical comedies' which for the last fifteen years or so have swamped London theatres and, at any rate as regards most of the productions of English and American hands, have enthroned on a very solid cash basis ideals of verbal and musical vulgarity which it will take many a long year to overthrow. There is abundant artistic scope for refined and cultured comic opera, that shall be something better than a heterogeneous variety entertainment of an inferior order; but the prospects of anything of the kind are very poor at present in England.

Turning now to consider the actual musical output of the latter part of the Victorian era, we must first discuss in some slight detail the work of the seven most prominent of the older composers of the time—Sullivan, Goring Thomas, Cowen, Mackenzie, Parry, Stanford, and Elgar; and it would perhaps seem, on the whole, rather more convenient to group their music round the individual men somewhat more definitely than has been our custom in earlier chapters. We cannot regard our contemporaries, as we can those of older times, as music-making abstractions; we have hardly yet—least of all in the case of men whose work is very far from done—acquired a sufficient perspective to enable us to separate, more or less artificially, their music into different compartments, and examine each independently. And as, in a scheme that aims at anything like a fair amount of completeness, it is impossible to omit mention of the leading living composers who have attained middle age, we are necessarily thrown back on rather wholesale methods of criticism. With the music of past generations it is possible to consider classes of works as independent elements, and later on briefly to summarize such results as our criticism may seem to have attained; but with composers of yesterday



or to-day such a method is hardly so clearly feasible, not only in view of their proximity to us, but also in view of the much greater complexity and variety of modern art-forms, which in most cases makes such classification as easily served before somewhat difficult and obscure.<sup>1</sup>

Sullivan was, beyond all question, the most widely popular English composer of the nineteenth century; and the impress that he has left on one department of English music is undoubtedly very deep, though it may not prove lasting. The comic operas written to the libretti of W. S. Gilbert made his reputation and form indeed his chief title to fame; though we cannot forget how enormous a share of the success they achieved was due to the brilliantly sparkling wit of his collaborator—a fact that becomes more and more palpable when we remember the comparative failure, though the music shows no difference in quality, of the operas subsequently written for other librettists. With Gilbert, no doubt, Sullivan was completely at home; the humours of the words and of the music fit as if they came from the same hand, the current of facile tune bubbles along gaily, and not infrequently (especially in the concerted music, such as the madrigal in *The Mikado*), we have something which in its trifling way is the work of a genuine and delicate-handed artist. But still it is nearly always the librettist who is the inspiring talent, though no doubt he could not have found any one else to second him so well; we laugh whole-heartedly at the words and are grateful that the music does not hinder our enjoyment. But while the words can be read by themselves, the music—as regards ninety-nine pages out of a hundred—is not self-subsisting; the overtures are mere emptiness unless we know beforehand to what words the tunes will afterwards be fitted. No doubt, with very few exceptions, Sullivan managed extraordinarily well to avoid in these works the vulgar banalities that so greatly disfigure

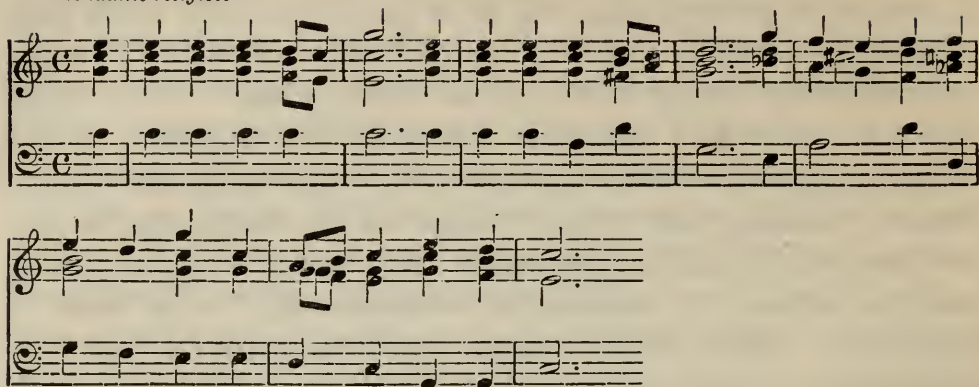
<sup>1</sup> What is often considered as a difficulty in dealing with living or only recently deceased composers seems to me, I confess, no practical difficulty at all. In his official capacity, no critic of literature or art or anything else recognizes the existence of such a thing as personal friendship, past or present; criticism on any other terms is merely a roundabout name for dishonesty.

most other specimens of modern English musical comedy; the music is mere froth, but it is almost always fresh and sparkling, it whiles away an hour in very agreeable fashion, and only very rarely leaves a bad taste behind. Its artistic merits are indeed in the main of a somewhat negative order; all the composer's talents are devoted to securing that every listener, whether his normal tastes be for Beethoven or for the music-hall, shall appreciate the words without being annoyed either by amateurish workmanship or by lack of simplicity. And, in the main, Sullivan achieves his end brilliantly; but for his positive qualities we have to look elsewhere.

He had imbibed all the orthodox Mendelssohnian traditions of his student days, and was also attracted by the frank *bonhomie* of the lighter works of Schubert, whose music he did much to make known; and the results are visible, when he is at his best, in admirably clear and economically effective orchestration, dexterous smooth workmanship, and an easy and continual flow of natural and, in its slight way, thoroughly individual tunefulness. In a few works—the *Di Ballo* overture, much of the *Tempest* incidental music, the song 'Orpheus with his lute', and a handful of other things—Sullivan shows the finish and fluent melodiousness of the comic operas under more independent conditions; they are essentially light music, but the melodies have point and charm of their own, and are not mere background. He might, indeed, with his fresh and distinctive gifts, have gone far, had he been endowed also with anything like steadiness of ideal; his best pages are nearly all comparatively early, but even then he turned out a great deal of very inferior music, and in later years the success of the operas seems to have blunted his capacity for really vitalized work on independent lines. We can never recollect without shame that the composer who stood for contemporary English music in the eyes of the world could put his name to disgraceful rubbish like 'The lost chord' or 'The sailor's grave' or, in what purported to be serious artistic work, sink to the abysmally cheap sentimentality of the opening tune of the *In Memoriam* overture—



No. 102.

*Andante religioso*

or the 'O pure in heart' chorus in *The Golden Legend*; and indeed there is a pitiful amount of this kind of thing. The sacred cantata *The Martyr of Antioch*, apart from a certain amount of a sort of mildly pleasant picturesqueness, alternates between dullness and vulgarity, and sometimes attains both at once; while the more ambitious oratorio *The Light of the World* has hardly enough vitality even to be vulgar. The later orchestral pieces, such as the *Macbeth* overture, come to singularly little, and *Ivanhoe*, the one 'serious' opera, is a purely elementary work all through, with a few fairly dramatic pages, but as a rule mere commonplace, the one really living thing being the bass air of Friar Tuck, that comes more or less close to the Savoy style; all the exciting situations are treated as mere 'theatrical business' with not a trace of workmanship worth mentioning, and the deadly dullness of nearly all of the opera passes belief. In *The Golden Legend* Sullivan no doubt pulled himself together to some extent; the Prologue (apart from the conventional chromatics), the end of Scene I, parts of the 'Journey to Salerno', of the love-duet, of the Epilogue—these show traces of the early talent, less satisfactory because more pretentious, but in their rather superficial way romantically pleasant enough. And indeed, apart from the painful lapses in the already mentioned 'O pure in heart' and at the end of 'O gladsome light', the rest of the work is hardly ever anything worse than dull drawing-room music; but for the best-known English composer in the very prime of life, and putting forth his full powers, *The Golden Legend* is,

as a whole, a melancholy production. After all, Sullivan is merely the idle singer of an empty evening; with all his gift for tunefulness he never could raise it to the height of a real strong melody, of the kind that appeals to cultured and relatively uncultured alike as a good folk-song does—often and often, on the other hand (but chiefly outside the operas), it sank to mere vulgar catchiness. He laid the original foundations of his success on work that, as a matter of fact, he did extremely well; and it would have been incalculably better for the permanence of his reputation if he had realized this, and set himself, with sincerity and self-criticism, to the task of becoming—as he might easily have become—a really great composer of musicianly light and humorous music. But anything like steadiness of artistic purpose was never one of his endowments; and without that, a composer, whatever his technical ability may be, is easily liable to degenerate into a mere popularity-hunting trifler.

Goring 'Thomas' artistic nature was far more steadfast, though just occasionally, as in the popular 'Summer night' and some other things, he turned out definitely low-class work; he never, on the other hand, attained the distinctiveness of utterance which marks Sullivan's style at its very best, though his general average is much higher. He is certainly the most Parisianized of all English composers; his training shows itself in nearly every page of his music, and his most characteristic and picturesque songs—'Le jeune pâtre,' for example—have all the polished delicacy and slightly sentimental charm that are such salient features in modern French work. Thomas is indeed an interesting instance of a composer possessing plenty of style but at the same time little individuality; his music at its best is full of point, but exactly the same points have also been made by others. His refined technique, his dainty turns of phrase, can be matched over and over again in modern French music; not that he is anything like a plagiarist, but this way of doing things seems somehow to be in the air of the boulevards, and the reverse of the same picture is seen in his permanent deficiency to write music possessing real emotional grip. Light music—of the essentially aristocratic (not, as with Sullivan, the democratic) type—is his *métier*;



and, like his models, he pursues his aim with, as a rule, undeniable skill and success. It is in the operas that his work is seen on the largest scale; and though, there as elsewhere, the current of inspiration sometimes runs distinctly thin, there is much of very real interest. *Esmeralda* in particular—perhaps his best composition—is a distinctly attractive work which deserves reviving; the more serious portions are, it is true, the less successful, but there is a great deal of delicate sparkle and charm (as in *Esmeralda*'s 'Swallow song', for example) not at all unworthy of Bizet himself, and the rollicking but thoroughly refined opening chorus should appeal to the lovers of stage 'Kermesse Music' who are justly tired of some other popular specimens. *Nadeshda* is a little more theatrical and a little less spontaneous; there are plenty of good pages in the opera, but the handling is rather more heavy. But in nearly all Thomas' work, whether for the stage or the concert-room, we see signs of an undeniable talent that might, but for his early death, have resulted in something worthy of a more permanent remembrance than his actual output is likely to attain.

The talent of Cowen is also of the lighter type, but it differs from that of Goring Thomas in being at the same time much more varied and also, in a way, considerably less thorough. There is also no trace worth mentioning of French influence; the style is in many respects a sort of combination of Sterndale Bennett and Sullivan, with the addition of elements of Cowen's own. We can see the resemblance to Sullivan in the very regrettable capacity for perpetrating inferior 'shop ballads', and also, in a worthier manner, in the talent for cleverly dainty and effective orchestration; while the influence of Bennett can be traced in the graceful ease of the workmanship at its best, and in the fondness for what may perhaps be called drawing-room pictorialism, though the colouring is inclined, as a rule, to lack the purity of Bennett's. But the pages where he treats subjects of a more or less fairylike character show him in his most individual mood; the best parts of *The Sleeping Beauty* or *The Water-Lily* are very polished and delicate work, not more, it is true, than ballet-music, but touched

with an exceptionally light hand, and in that slender way sometimes very charming. It is, so to speak, water-colour work like Bennett's, but is far more piquant than serenely classical (as is that of the older composer); nor is it exactly French or Mendelssohnian—it is, in its slight evanescent style, something that may fairly be called Cowen's own. Though, indeed, it is not so very often that he is really at his best; he is unfortunately capable of writing a good deal of music where the daintiness of touch degenerates into mere refined commonplace or still lower into mere triviality—for example, the well-known 'Elegance and grace' gavotte from the *Language of the Flowers* suite does most of the rest of the work scant justice. And as a general rule he is less happy in his more serious moods; *Ruth* and *Thorgrim*, which may fairly be taken as typical of his oratorios and his operas, are rather obvious works, containing a good deal of suave picturesqueness of a kind, but (especially the former) singularly little that is at all solidly satisfying. And the same may be said of his symphonies and other non-fairylike instrumental music; there is plenty of cleverness and, more especially in the Adagio of the 'Idyllic' symphony and the first movement of the 'Scandinavian', with its happily designed opening, there is interesting material, but somehow there is a lack of vitality about the works as wholes. In the 'Welsh' symphony, in particular, we see how his style is inclined to become uncertain when he feels he must not indulge his desire to be frankly pretty; that really is his *métier*, and at his best he can exercise it with a graceful adroitness that compels the admiration even of those who may feel that it is but a small thing on which to found a reputation. It is true that there are occasional glimpses of something more: the setting of Collins' *Ode to the Passions*—probably Cowen's best work—shows plenty of vitalized utterance of a considerably more solid kind than usual, and not a few pages in it combine their composer's usual melodiousness with definite emotional strength. But to this level, we must confess, he rises but seldom.

Mackenzie, Cowen's senior by five years, is a composer of undeniable talent and serious aims, whose development seems, for some reason or other (probably pressure of non-creative



work) to have come more or less to a standstill in early middle life. A sort of quiet but nevertheless warm picturesqueness is the quality chiefly shown in his best compositions, such as the beautiful orchestral ballad to Keats' poem *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (produced in 1883, and still unsurpassed), the Dirge in *The Dream of Jubal*, the finest portions of *Colomba* and *The Troubadour*, *The Rose of Sharon* and *The Story of Sayid*—one and all dating from the eighties; he has also shown with success a partiality for works based on the general lines of his native folk-melodies, such as the Scottish Rhapsodies for orchestra, the 'Pibroch' violin concerto, and others. His first opera, *Colomba*, contains many pages of very real living grace and charm; it is strongly influenced no doubt by the methods of Bizet's *Carmen*, but not to such an extent as to cause any sacrifice of individuality. *The Troubadour*, though its peculiarly bloodcurdling libretto hindered its success, also contains some of its composer's most romantic work and shows plenty of delicate characterization; indeed, Mackenzie has always seemed to find a special attraction in the stage, small in amount as is his output in that field. The libretto of the oratorio *The Rose of Sharon* (1884), his most important choral work, is based on the *Song of Solomon*, with the rather incongruous additions of a Prologue and Epilogue (the music to the latter not being printed in the vocal score), and the emotional fervour of the Eastern love-poem affords chances of which some admirable use has been made; the 'Sleep' scene in the third part is one of Mackenzie's most remarkable and imaginative pages, and some of the choruses, though redolent of what might be called highly modernized Mendelssohnianism, are in their way decidedly impressive. But the oratorio unfortunately declines in interest towards the end: and indeed its composer's talent is of a somewhat uncertain order. He has plenty of versatility, and has never written below his own musicianly standards—the fun of the *Britannia* nautical overture, for example, though rather obvious, is very workmanlike—but a considerable quantity of his music does not show any particularly distinctive qualities of any kind. Mackenzie, indeed, is the salient representative of the purely transitional school; with some

contemporaries whose work runs in very similar channels, he seems to recognize the unworthiness of anything short of the highest ideal, without, save sporadically, being able to make any notable personal contribution towards its attainment.

We now come to the trio of composers who stand by common consent at the head of modern English music; of these the eldest is Parry, and indeed his work shows the most affinity to the methods of the older classics. In some of his earlier instrumental compositions<sup>1</sup> we find indeed sections which produce a somewhat anachronistic effect by their frank adoption of eighteenth-century formulae, and on the whole, in spite of the many admirable pages in such works as the 'Cambridge' Symphony (especially the slow movement, one of Parry's very finest inspirations) or the Symphonic Variations for orchestra or the B minor trio for piano and strings, and others besides, he is not at his best in instrumental writing; massive and earnest as the musicianship invariably is, the thematic invention is not, as a rule, of very special individuality, and the touch is inclined to be heavy. With certain notable exceptions, like the fine part-song 'There rolls the deep', the same may, to a greater or less extent, be said of the smaller vocal compositions; it is when using the spacious medium of chorus and orchestra combined that Parry's true *métier* is displayed.

Bach and Brahms, and to a considerably less degree, Handel and Mendelssohn, are the sources out of which Parry has developed his own thoroughly characteristic style as exemplified in his choral works of the last twenty years; and it is curious that his earliest writing for that medium is to a very large extent unaffected by any of them. *Prometheus Unbound*, his first really important production, has never yet come to its own; but both it and the slightly later setting of Shirley's ode from *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* ('The glories of our blood and state') show features that the later work lacks. It is easy to see that in certain respects the technical handling is less mature than it afterwards became; but nearly every page of Shirley's Ode, and in *Prometheus* such things

<sup>1</sup> As, for example, the Duo for two pianofortes in E minor or the Partita for violin and pianoforte in D minor.



(among several others) as the 'Light of life' chorus and the splendid closing scene, are instinct with a sort of youthful and yet deep emotional thrill that the more restrained later work very rarely shows in anything like the same form. If we seek for a definite birthday for modern English music, September 7, 1880, when *Prometheus* saw the light at Gloucester and met with a distinctly mixed reception, has undoubtedly the best claim; and it is difficult to avoid a certain feeling of regret that Parry has, in his later years, left this particular vein wellnigh untouched. But in the later style, seen at its best in such works as *Blest Pair of Sirens*, *Job*, *L'Allegro*, *De Profundis*, *Invocation to Music*, *Ode to Music*, *The Lotus-eaters*, the *Te Deum* (1900) and, though perhaps in a more unequal degree, in many others besides, there are plenty of compensations. There is real nobility of manner about the finest specimens of his broad choral writing with its powerful dignified climaxes—nobility of a kind that is the reverse of common in modern English or any other compositions; he has the Handelian love of straightforward piling up of great masses of sound, and he manages such effects with consummate skill (though it must be confessed that at times he shows another and less attractive type of neo-Handelianism in allowing his instruments to bustle around in a rather vaguely genial fashion to fill up the gaps when the current of inspiration temporarily fails).<sup>1</sup> But his general outlook is distinctly more akin to that of Bach; there is something of the same large-hearted disregard of relatively unimportant matters, something of the same love of massive intellectualism. Not of course that Parry (any more than Bach, or any one else worth mentioning) is, in the abusive sense of a much misunderstood word, an 'academic' composer; he is quite at home in plenty of things besides counterpoint. It is true that he has never again caught the lyrical rapture of the best parts of *Prometheus Unbound*; but the fresh spring-like grace and the happy gravity or grave happiness of the best numbers of *L'Allegro* (in many respects indeed Parry has a singular affinity with Milton), the solemn impressiveness of such pages

<sup>1</sup> An interlude in the finale of the *St. Cecilia's Day Ode* is perhaps the most striking lengthy example of this trait.

as the dirges in the *Invocation to Music* and *War and Peace*, the finest parts of *The Love that casteth out Fear*, or the two great sections in *Job*, the delicate pathos of the Euridice music in *St. Cecilia's Day* or the 'Tears' chorus in the *Song of Darkness and Light*, the picturesque expression of the sea-pictures in the *Invocation* or the honeyed languor of *The Lotus-eaters*, the jovial humour of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* or the Aristophanic plays—all these show real versatility of style, though it is easy to see in them all the same hand at work, and the same strong feeling for the spacious things.

It is true that Parry is far from being an equal composer; composition is indeed only one of the elements in an extraordinarily busy life, but still he has produced a very large mass of music. Occasionally he may write pages of mere bluff breeziness without any adequate impulse behind them, and the firm touch occasionally becomes ponderous; but hardly any composers in the history of the art give a more vivid impression of unswerving sincerity of aim, and when the flame of his genius burns brightest, it stirs our blood with a real living heat. It is, however, very curious that the oratorio *Judith*—the one sole composition in which (in spite of fine things here and there, such as, especially, Meshullemeth's ballad) Parry rather approaches the commonplace—should have been one of his most popularly successful productions; both libretto and music hark back very largely to traditions which have fully served their time, and it is a remarkable illustration of their firm clutch on the hearts of choral societies and their patrons, that so many incalculably finer efforts of Parry's pen should have been virtually swamped by what, with all its sincerity, is a reactionary work. Happily posterity, in estimating the real merits of one of the truest and most single-minded leaders of our modern art, will have many other things to admire.

Like Parry, Stanford has never from the first written anything to tarnish the purity of his ideal; but his temperament has led him into somewhat different paths. His Irish blood has shown itself not only in his frequent researches into the rich store of his native folk-music, but also in his versatile susceptibility to many and various influences; individual



as his utterance is, it is, so to speak, a very composite blend. Quite apart from the Irish folk-songs that he has edited, and many movements coloured more or less by such influences, he has produced in the opera *Shamus O'Brien*, or the choral ballad *Phaudrig Crohoore*, something that is virtually Irish folk-music itself; *Shamus O'Brien* in particular—one of the most deliciously 'open-air' works in all British music—is crammed full of tunes which, without any suspicion of plagiarism, seem to suggest that their composer has lived in the wilds of Ireland all his life. We see French influence, especially that of Bizet, in considerable tracts of *The Three Holy Children* and *The Veiled Prophet*, signs of the later Verdi in the *Requiem* and the *Te Deum*, of Sebastian Wesley in the Anglican anthems and services, of Brahms in the chamber-music; and yet all this roving results in something really characteristic, something that is unmistakably Stanford himself. Though it cannot, save occasionally, be said of his music that it suggests the incommensurable things in art (for which we have indeed still, in the main, to look to foreign work), it always shows a singular deftness of handling and a sort of brilliant, sensitive adaptability of mood that we do not see elsewhere in English music in at all the same forms; the style at its best is full of vitality, and the musicianship, even when the themes are not specially striking, is invariably impeccable.

In certain respects, perhaps, Stanford displays his most distinguished manner when working on a small canvas. The subtle imaginativeness of songs like 'The Fairy Lough' or 'Homeward bound' is extraordinary; and, in a brighter mood, the choral settings of Elizabethan Pastorals are marked by an exquisitely polished delicacy that perhaps no other modern English musician has equalled. Again, movements like the beautiful slow section of the 'Irish' Symphony in F minor are altogether his own; and so is wonderfully picturesque sea-music like *The Revenge*, or *The Voyage of Maeldune*, the latter of which, especially, contains some of his very best work. Speaking generally, he seems (apart from the 'Irish' Symphony and Rhapsodies, and similarly quasi-native music like the 'Irish Fantasies' for violin) to be less at home in instrumental compositions than in those where

the addition of words gives a special stimulus; and in vocal music he seems most inspired by words that afford, so to speak, a certain amount of concrete imagery. His large ecclesiastical works, such as the 'Mass in G', the 'Requiem', the 'Te Deum', exemplify this in different ways; the first-named is perhaps the least interesting of his mature compositions and the other two, in spite of admirable sections—most of all the very fine Introit and Kyrie of the 'Requiem'—do not, as wholes, fairly represent him. The colouring is often strikingly rich, almost voluptuous—as is especially shown in the feathery Sanctus of the 'Requiem' or the grandiose last pages of the 'Te Deum'; but the general effect is somehow not altogether successful. *Eden*, curiously unequal though the long oratorio is, offers Stanford's particular type of genius more frequent chances; several numbers of the 'Heaven' section, the first chorus of devils, parts of the 'Vision of Good', and most of all the very solemn and tender 'Vision of Christ' and final pages, are in their different ways very arresting music, and the last-named portion shows the composer in his loftiest vein. Loftiness is again the distinguishing feature of the early setting of Whitman's great *Ode to Death* (Stanford's literary taste is always impeccable), the varying moods of which are very successfully caught; and, at the opposite extreme, we see his strong sense of humour, quite apart from Irish influences, in the delightful Dogberry music in the opera *Much Ado about Nothing*. Generally speaking, however, Stanford seems most attracted by two things—Irish national music and a sort of broadly Tennysonian romanticism. He avowedly uses a considerable number of his native folk-tunes as material in several of his works, and, apart from these, he very frequently writes original music that breathes an exactly similar spirit; and, when in this mood, he almost invariably produces results of a really vital attractiveness and charm. His Tennysonian spirit shows itself in his great partiality for words dealing with nature, especially with the sea, or expressing the romantic side of patriotism; in these and similar veins he is again completely at home, and possesses a singular power of subtle pictorialism that is entirely devoid of the faintest exaggeration and yet is



very direct and vivid. Stanford is a prolific writer, and in some of his very numerous compositions he may fail to be more than the skilful craftsman; but it is quite certain that his best work will, in virtue of the living imaginativeness that inspires it, survive among the permanently notable achievements of English art.

Few things in the history of modern music are more remarkable than Elgar's sudden leap into something like world-wide fame<sup>1</sup>; indeed, no composer has had an artistic career like his. Like Berlioz, his nearest parallel, he is a free lance, self-taught, and influenced very slightly by the current traditions of his time; but unlike Berlioz, whose work is all of a piece from the very start, Elgar began on lines almost entirely alien to his later methods. All composers, even the greatest, have of course written relatively inferior (often very inferior) work at some period or other; and some have only for the first time found themselves artistically in middle life, like Wagner, or in old age, like Verdi. But Elgar, till he was considerably over thirty years of age, was known chiefly by, so to speak, 'smart society' music—the *Salut d'amour* kind of production that seeks and finds its reward in the West End drawing-room, clever and shallow and artistically quite unpromising; and even in the days of his high fame, he has had (at any rate for a time) the heavy millstone of aristocratic fashionableness hanging round his neck, and may over and over again well have prayed to be delivered from his friends.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there was no particular reason for any one to prophesy any special future for him: in the best work of the transition period there were no doubt points of interest of various kinds—the pleasant picturesqueness of *The Black Knight* and the Serenade for strings, several parts of *King Olaf* (especially the powerful 'Challenge of Thor'), and the very fine sombre 'Lament' in

<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, absurd to attach too much importance to such a fact in itself; there is music of far wider cosmopolitan reputation totally unworthy to be ranked either with Elgar's or with masses of other work possessing only a quite limited public appeal.

<sup>2</sup> 'Elgar is probably the greatest musician, from the religious point of view, that ever lived' (*Sketch*, Feb. 22, 1905) is the kind of thing he has had to endure.

*Caractacus*—but still these were so much overbalanced by things like the conscientious sentimentality of the great bulk (though not indeed all) of the *The Light of Life*, the rather blatant hardness of the last section of *The Banner of St. George* and the 'Imperial March', and the superficial appeal of the salon music, that it seemed decidedly doubtful whether the obvious talent would ever result in anything really vital. It was not until 1899 that Elgar found his fully individual method of expression in some fine *Sea Pictures* for contralto and orchestra, and in an astonishingly subtle and imaginative set of orchestral variations (which very many musicians are still inclined to consider his best work); *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900), in which the new style was first shown on an extended scale, had to wait some time for its second performance, and three years before it was heard in London, but after its great success in Germany its composer's popularity swelled rapidly to enormous proportions. It was fairly obvious from the start that the movement, which began in London with the performance of *The Dream of Gerontius* at the Westminster Catholic Cathedral in 1903, was to some extent of a merely evanescent character; and the comparatively cool reception accorded to *The Kingdom* (1906), which is certainly by no means inferior to Elgar's other mature works, seems to show that it has already nearly spent itself, as was bound sooner or later to be the case. But though pessimistic voices are heard prophesying that Elgar will find his level by the side of people like the composers of *The Redemption* or *The Resurrection of Lazarus*, yet the reality would seem to be far otherwise; Elgar is too great a composer not to be able to come out at the other side of his trying experiences—as Gounod and Lorenzo Perosi (the priest-musician who, after being urged upon Europe with the whole driving force of the Roman Church, was dropped just at the beginning of Elgar's popularity) were certainly not able to do.

Apart from a certain number of small works, either several years old or written in imitation of earlier models, Elgar has, since 1899, published nothing which does not bear his own characteristic sign-manual; and in slender pro-



ductions like the Greek Anthology lyrics for male voices or other similarly most remarkable part-songs like 'Weary wind of the west' or 'Evening scene' the individual vitality of utterance is quite as conspicuous as in the large choral works or orchestral compositions such as the *In the South* overture. In feeling for colour—colour of every conceivable kind—Elgar is surpassed by no living composer, English or foreign, and as an orchestrator he is among the very greatest in musical history; his melodies and harmonies are always his own and sometimes very beautiful, and he shows, like his contemporary and great admirer, Richard Strauss, a singular power of reaching the essence of the words he chooses to set—especially when they give opportunity for the expression of emotional drama or religious feeling in the terms of mystical but modern Catholicism. The sort of entrancing unearthly charm of such music as the songs of the Angel in *Gerontius* or the setting of the Beatitudes in *The Apostles* is without parallel in English work; it is wonderfully subtle and intimate, and yet the appeal which it makes is very direct. He threads the mazes of the most elaborate polyphony with easy assurance; vividness, courage, modernity inspire every page of the works by which he bids fair to live.

There is, however, the other side to the picture. We cannot help noticing here and there a lack of sustained thematic inventiveness, a deficiency in the power of broadly organic construction; even when, in a way, quite original, the material sometimes consists of scraps of music, neither individually nor collectively of any particular interest beyond mere colour, joined together by methods not altogether convincing. Occasionally also there seems an undue reliance on a rather hot-house type of emotionalism, that every now and then comes near degenerating into a somewhat forced pseudo-impressiveness; the melodramatic bars that depict the suicide of Judas in *The Apostles* set on edge the teeth of listeners who have felt to the full the dramatic power of the pages that precede them, and there are parts of *Gerontius'* confession of faith that, though sincere, nevertheless suggest an atmosphere of artificial flowers. Sometimes the splendour

of the frame tends to hide the picture; and in the picture itself, when we do see it, the gorgeous colour tends to hide the drawing. His most inspired pages excepted, it is not altogether paradoxical to say that even the later Elgar is a light composer compared with the classics; the relatively sensuous elements seem often to be the main consideration,<sup>1</sup> and it is very rarely that he shows anything of the bracing sternness that lies at the root of the supreme music of the world. The path of picturesque emotionalism is beset with snares, and Elgar has not escaped them every one; but, when all is said, an unmistakably new and living voice of high genius is something for which we must needs be lastingly grateful, and—remembering his astounding progress in the past ten years—we cannot but believe that there is still a further future before this youngest of our leaders.

The great bulk of the music that later Victorian composers have written for the services of the Anglican church is something altogether *sui generis*; and the deepest impress upon it is not that of any Englishman, but of a foreigner attached to another creed. To Dykes, Barnby, and Stainer, Gounod, whether they fully recognized the fact or not, was an influence incomparably greater than Sebastian Wesley or Goss, though the latter, in his inferior moods, shows signs of the change of ideal; the methods of the 'Messe Solennelle' and 'Nazareth' are visible everywhere, but nevertheless the work is definitely, so to speak, non-mystical—it is Gounod's ideal in terms of Protestantism. Sullivan's church music represents, it is true, something of a divergence from the main stream; as a rule, it is more straightforward and old-fashioned in type, and things like 'Onward Christian soldiers', or such parts of the elaborate 'Festival Te Deum' as the 'We therefore pray thee' section or the Military Band march at the end, show a sort of good-natured, frank, more or less healthy vulgarity that is not visible in the work of the others. Indeed, Sullivan's church music shows traces of many in-

<sup>1</sup> To say this is not, of course, for a moment to impute any lack of seriousness of aim (no living musician is at present less open to that charge) nor the kind of insensibility to intellectual considerations which makes Tchaikovsky, even at his gloomiest, something like a mere high-class *salon* composer.



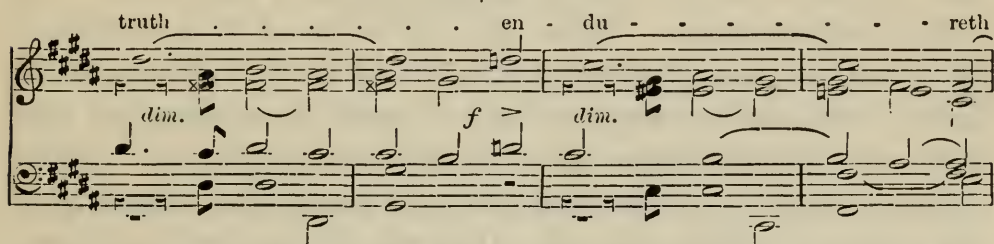
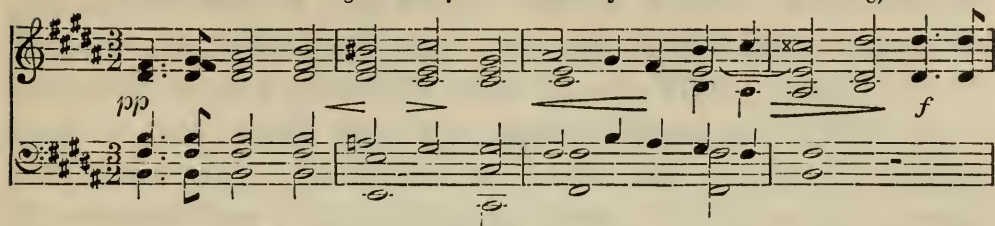
fluences; some pages are diluted, but not, in its way, at all unpleasant Mendelssohnianism, others suggest Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, others the Savoy operas. But in the hymns and services and anthems of Dykes and Barnby and Stainer there is not this conflict of styles; their work is all of a piece. No doubt Stainer, very much the most gifted of the three, could occasionally produce music of a different order, as, for instance, the picturesque and powerful opening section of the eight-part anthem 'I saw the Lord'; but (as indeed the rest of this anthem exemplifies somewhat markedly) the effort was never long-sustained. The general work of these three and their numerous followers is, as a matter of fact, remarkably homogeneous. The musical historians of centuries hence will be able to date things like the 'Sevenfold Amen' or the tune of 'Lead kindly light' within a decade or two as infallibly as a skilled palaeographer dates a mediaeval MS.; there has been no music like it before, and the signs of the times are showing fairly plainly that it is highly improbable that there will ever be music like it again. From the time of the appearance of 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' in 1861 down to only a few years back, this style ruled English church music almost unchallenged; a few things here and there—a small handful by Parry, a larger handful by Stanford, and a certain number of works on the same lines by other, chiefly younger, men—did indeed herald the revolt which we are now beginning to see, but they were greatly overbalanced. The tide of sentimentalism was very strong while it flowed, and even now that it is ebbing it requires very careful watching<sup>1</sup>; but there is no doubt by now that English religious music has come safely through a period on which future historians will look back with the reverse of pride. We may now assume with considerable confidence that cheaply sugary harmony and palsied part-writing of the kind shown in the Verse 'For the Lord is gracious' from the Jubilate of Barnby's Service in E will not again be imposed upon the world as typical English art—

<sup>1</sup> It is to be regretted that the recently-formed 'Church Music Society' has not taken up a more categorical position in its first official pronouncement (January, 1907).

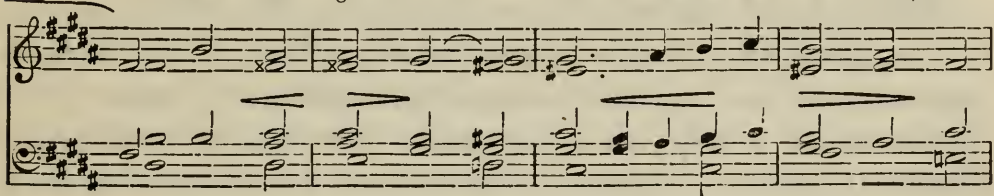
No. 103.

*Andante grazioso*

For the Lord is gra-cious, his mer-cy is ev-er-last-ing, and his



from one ge-ne-ra-tion to an-o-ther, &amp;c.



Nevertheless, speaking generally, the advance of taste among church musicians is shown rather in deeper and wider appreciation of the great achievements of the past than in the creation of new works; to a very large majority of the younger talented composers the field of Anglican worship-music offers no present attraction.

There seems to be a general consensus of opinion<sup>1</sup> that Cowen, Elgar, Mackenzie, Parry, and Stanford form the leading quintet of the older living English composers; but nevertheless only three of the five have perceptibly directed the course of native art. Cowen and Mackenzie, with a certain number of contemporaries, whom it is not part of the present scheme to name, though excellent work has come from their pens,

<sup>1</sup> The circular (July, 1906) of the newly-formed 'British Composers' Society' is a definite and quasi-official piece of evidence.



represent merely the earliest stage of the renaissance of English music ; Parry, Stanford, and Elgar are the dominating influences, and it is to the men born since 1860 that we look for the future. Only one of these, William Yeates Hurlstone (1876-1906) has passed from us ; but there are a large number of others that could be named who, like him, have shown earnest artistic work of high promise and occasionally of real achievement. Those who know most of the music of the younger men of other nations will be the first to admit that the general average in this country is at least as high as in any other ; there are not, it is true, any very notable geniuses visible on the horizon anywhere, but there is no reason why, in their due time, they should not be found here.

Oratorios and oratorio-like works appear but seldom among the compositions of this newer school, which in this respect does not—with one or two exceptions—follow its leaders ; but specimens of nearly all other forms abound, in manuscript if not in print. A large number of the composers born since 1880 show in their orchestral writings many traces of the influence of Tchaikovsky and Richard Strauss, but at the same time there is plenty of practice of chamber-music in the classical forms ; and though the vocal work is as a rule on a considerably smaller scale, there is no lack of it. Of really distinctive individual utterance there is, it is true, not as yet very much except in the work of just a few men ; but there is a busy activity of solid talent with some of which the musical historian of the future will doubtless have very seriously to reckon. The leaders of our Renaissance, many of whose contemporaries are still to all intents and purposes under the old bondage, are in a sense isolated figures ; but now, thanks to them, English music is in the throes of a new birth, and there is not an educated composer of the age of twenty who would not laugh to scorn work that forty years ago was almost universally worshipped. A certain amount of froth is necessarily thrown off in such an awakening ; and we need not trouble overmuch about exaggerations and eccentricities which will find their level soon enough. The men in whose hands the future of English music rests are artistically alive ; and that is, after all, the main thing.

## CHAPTER XII

### FOLK-MUSIC

FOLK-MUSIC is a term of curiously, but perhaps inevitably, loose signification. Some would include under it all tunes, whether by known composers or not, and from the earliest times down to the music-hall or hymn-tune of to-day, which have for some reason or other become, if as a rule only temporarily, part of what may be called the artistic life of a considerable number of people, just as proverbs or fragments of literature of various kinds become part of common speech ; others would agree with this except in so far as they exclude all music of the last century which is not anonymous ; others, again, would omit from the older work all signed compositions of any date except the national, patriotic tunes ; while still others prefer to define folk-music as 'evolved music', and exclude everything except tunes having their original birth among the unlearned classes of society, by whom they have been handed down by a purely oral tradition. Perhaps it may be most convenient for our present purpose if we here define folk-music as, (1), in the strict sense, including all tunes that, whether originally designed monophonically or not, have come at one period or another to be very generally so regarded, and, (2), in the narrower sense to which we shall here confine ourselves (the rest of the field having been covered in previous chapters), including such tunes as were, in the minds of their technically unskilled makers, independent (so far as we can discover) of any necessary harmonic support. After all, we have to remember that folk-music does not 'spring from the hearts of the People' (with a capital P) in a sense that implies its being the work of nobody in particular ; some individual brain is ultimately responsible for every note of it, even if, as may usually be the case, it may be the brain of some one lacking the power to place his thoughts on paper. We may meet with



the same tune in dozens of slightly varying forms (even on the lips of the same singer), and we may even be able to trace the gradual melting of one tune into another totally different ; but at every stage there must necessarily be some one more or less consciously at work who, however technically unlearned, is in essentials as much a musical composer as any holder of that title. Folk-music is indeed, like all things dependent on oral tradition, in a quite hopelessly fluid state, and the researcher practically never finds really firm ground under his feet ; but nevertheless we certainly cannot draw any hard and fast line between it and what is called 'composed music.' The Essex singer who remarked to an inquirer that 'when you got the words, God Almighty sent the tune' is continually quoted by the enthusiasts ; but unfortunately the particular tune in question,<sup>1</sup> though very beautiful, is clearly an imperfect reminiscence of something else, and anyhow the hundreds of cases of the same tune being traditionally fitted to many different sets of words, and vice versa, play havoc with the theory of divine inspiration.

Folk-music, as here defined, is a rapidly dying form of art ; civilization and culture and all the rest of the blessings of to-day are inevitably killing it, and the feverishly energetic (and most praiseworthy) efforts that are being made to give it the security of writing are no doubt too late to collect more than fragments of what must have been a very large mass of orally transmitted music. The men and women from whose lips the missionaries of the Folk-song Society are now taking down these songs are nearly all of the generation that is passing away ; their children take little or no heed of such things, which form part of a simpler and less breathless world—and if they show any musical instincts, they probably learn the piano, which, by universal testimony, is a fatal proceeding. With the words which are more or less closely connected with most folk-music we have not here to deal ; but there is no denying the merits of the great bulk of the tunes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Bushes and Briars' (Folk-song Society's Journal, viii).

<sup>2</sup> No musician can have anything but the warmest praise for the efforts now being made to popularize folk-music, in the broad sense of the word, in the elementary schools of this country ; there is no sort of doubt that the great bulk of the individuals whom it is the fashion to call the lower

Even when least distinctive in quality—and many have certainly little enough to boast of in this respect—they have still the touch of natural sincerity which goes far to cover a multitude of those negative sins which are all that can be laid to their charge; and when at their best, they give us melody that the greatest composers would have been proud to sign. To suit tastes more sophisticated than those of their own makers and original hearers, the tunes have been harmonized and ‘arranged’ in countless fashions—sometimes extremely well, sometimes extremely badly; but, unless we are prepared to accept the theory that the concert-room is the only place for hearing music, it is a fairly arguable question whether the work, even when in first-rate hands, wants doing at all. In the field of British folk-music we have the wonderfully pointed and polished settings of Byrd, Morley, and other Elizabethans, and in later times the finely musicianly versions of men like Stanford and several others who might be named, to make us forget the too frequent miserable productions of arrangers without either taste or knowledge; but still it is not altogether a paradox to say that the better the work is done, and the more subtly artistic the supplied accompaniment, however simple, the more does the essential *naïveté* of the folk-tune tend to disappear, and the more does it become merged in the general mass of musicians’ music. We obtain very beautiful polished songs, for which we must needs be grateful; but we strike a blow at the root-principle of the great unharmonized music—the sole artistic protest against artistic culture that history knows. There is of course no denying the difficulty that besets such an argument in the fact that, save in the rarest instances, the only ground we have for calling a tune originally monophonic is that no original harmonization of it is known: and these are obviously shifting sands on which to build theories. To the musical historian with a strong desire for strictly logical classification, folk-music is the most

classes respond readily to the influence of really fine art if they only have a chance of receiving it, and are not put off with the products of the music-hall and the feebly pottering rubbish that used to be supposed to be good enough for board schools. And when objections are made as to the unsuitability of the traditional words, the answer is easy: let fresh words be written—‘the tune’s the thing.’



irritatingly elusive of all the matters with which he has to deal; but after all we need not allow that to interfere with our enjoyment.

And the student of British folk-music has not only to contend with the difficulty that at any day it may be discovered that the tune with which he is concerned is not, in the restricted definition of the word, folk-music at all.<sup>1</sup> Though the popular tunes of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland have their own broadly racial characteristics, yet there are some which, while obviously unlike foreign folk-music, are, so to speak, cosmopolitanly British, or at any rate share in the typical features of the tunes of at least two of the four nations. Favourite melodies become disseminated in widely separate localities, and the Cheviot Hills and the Irish Channel themselves are far from being insurmountable barriers. Sometimes we can say with considerable confidence that a tune found in both Scotland and Ireland is really English in origin; sometimes again the reverse is the case, as with such well-known tunes as 'The girl I left behind me' and 'The Arethusa', which, long supposed to be pure English, are most probably pure Irish. But though the finest melodies of each race bear upon them unmistakable signs of their origin, there remain a very great many of less distinctive quality, about which the researcher can really not make any dogmatic assertions; folk-tunes are so continually subject to slight modifications that even certain typically racial characteristics are no infallible guide to the ultimate source. And further, some of the older historians of folk-music, chiefly those of Scottish blood, were by no means averse to a certain amount of enthusiastic but deliberate stealing, in the interests of patriotism.

One point connected with the whole of British folk-music is now, after long misunderstanding, perfectly clear. Until a comparatively recent period the belief was firmly held—apparently on purely *a priori* grounds—that the 'ecclesiastical modes' were confined to the service of the church, and that we owe the modern scale-system to the natural instinct of the makers of folk-tunes. As a matter of fact, the major and minor scales are by no means uncommon in ancient church

<sup>1</sup> There is, however, little danger of this except with English melodies.

compositions, and in folk-music modal tonality is extremely frequent down to the present day. A vast amount of havoc has been worked in the past by arrangers careless or ignorant of this; sharpened leading-notes and all sorts of things have been illegitimately inserted right and left in order to make the tunes 'sound proper', and many well-known melodies ('The last rose of summer' is an instance) have in consequence become traditional in a hopelessly vulgarized form. No doubt we have to discard from the category of normal modal tunes those frequent circular melodies which, whatever may be their scale, are designed so as to lead straight on from one verse to the next, the last notes being altered at the conclusion of the whole; we have also to remember the difficulty that at times is found in taking down an unusual type of tune from the lips of uncultivated singers possessing no special capacity for exact intonation.<sup>1</sup> But, after every allowance has been made, there still survives a very large and quite indubitable mass of modal music that has entirely outlasted the fashions of modern composition; and in consequence folk-tunes are, so far as tonality is concerned, the most varied of all. In British folk-music, the Dorian is on the whole the commonest of the old modes; the Mixolydian and Aeolian come next (though in England the latter is considerably less frequently met with than the other two),<sup>3</sup> the Phrygian is distinctly rare,<sup>2</sup> and the Lydian is almost unknown. Sometimes, however, the tonalities become confused (a Mixolydian scale with an occasionally flattened third is fairly often noticeable) or the same melody is found in different modes, as well as, perhaps, in the ordinary major scale also; the minor scale is by no means common.

Quite apart from folk-tunes in the usual sense of compositions of some shape and structure (whether they are associated with secular words or take the form of carols makes no musical difference), the researcher may diverge into some

<sup>1</sup> Nor for exact rhythm either; tunes that depart from regular rhythmical standards are of necessity conjectural in some important features.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes (the fine English tune 'The trees they grow so high', in the form in which it is quoted in the Folk-song Society's Journal, vii, No. 15, is an instance) a melody has been claimed as Phrygian on the strength of an unimportant final note to a short syllable, whereas really it is pure Aeolian in every essential that counts.



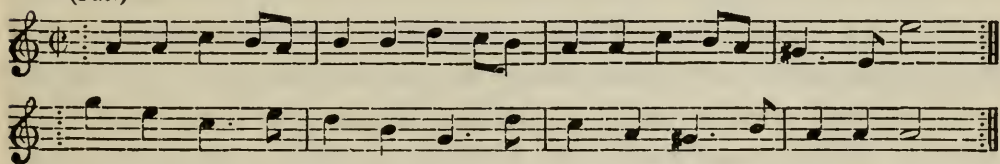
by no means uninteresting bypaths: nursery ditties, sailors' 'chanties,' street cries, and similar half unconscious artistic utterances are often curious and attractive, and very possibly of considerable antiquity. Lavender-sellers, in particular, seem to be prone to what are virtually hereditary musical formulae, handed down from parent to child—sometimes indeed antiphonal in character, the two halves of the formula being alternately sung by two persons on either side of a street.

It is only with regard to the folk-music of England itself that we can make any chronological division of our material. Quite apart from the oral traditions of what we may call the relatively uncultured classes of society, we have a large mass of documentary evidence<sup>1</sup> of folk-music ranging over a space of about two hundred and fifty years, from 1500 to 1750, with a certain amount of still earlier work of which, in the first and second chapters of this book, we have already spoken. These written folk-melodies may be divided into two great classes, dating from before and from after the middle of the seventeenth century; minor subdivisions can be traced, but they are unimportant. In the sixteenth century our sources consist, to start with, of miscellaneous 'commonplace-books' and vocal arrangements, and afterwards of lute-books and virginal-books containing settings of the popular tunes of the time, sometimes with elaborate variations on them—these, centring round 1600, are the most valuable sources we possess; early in the seventeenth century these are supplemented by Ravenscroft's *Pammelia*, *Deuteromelia*, and *Melismata*, and subsequent collections of catches and similar settings of familiar melodies, published both in England and in the Netherlands. Authorities of this latter kind are very numerous after the Restoration, and, in addition, we have the several voluminous editions of *The Dancing Master*, and, in the eighteenth century, the ballad operas; while, in both the earlier and later periods,

<sup>1</sup> But we cannot draw a hard and fast line between the traditional melodies and those derived from written sources; there are no tangible differences of style, and as soon as any collector of to-day places on paper the songs he hears from the lips of the peasantry, he is creating documentary evidence which, in essentials, is, so far as we can tell, identical with that on which we depend for most 'non-traditional' folk-music. The sharp distinction made in Wooldridge's *Old English Popular Music*—the most authoritative modern book on the subject—is rather misleading.

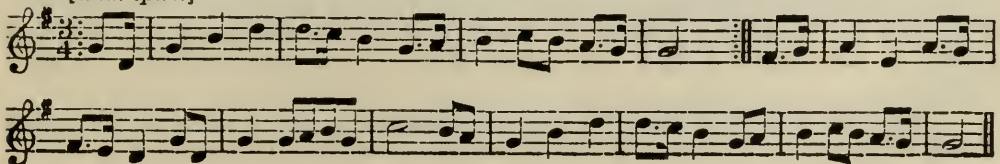
we often find folk-tunes imbedded in works of which the greater part is the composition of perfectly well-known men. In some cases we first meet in the latter half of the seventeenth century with tunes the style of which is obviously earlier--the Mixolydian 'The merry milkmaids' is a familiar and excellent instance: and some specially popular melodies, such as 'Green Sleeves,' 'Sellenger's Round,' 'Packington Pound,' 'Trenchmore,' 'John come kiss me now,' 'The hunt is up,' 'Walsingham,' 'The woods so wild,' 'Row well ye mariners,' 'Hanskin,' &c. are found, often with different words, under different titles, and in different forms, both in early authorities and in those of post-Restoration times, though the eighteenth-century ballad operas confined themselves practically entirely to tunes of the more modern type. Not only in English, but in all folk-music, the numerous diversities of melodies (which sometimes, by cumulative small changes, become almost unrecognizable) give the student considerable trouble to discover the earliest shape; 'The British Grenadiers' is the result of some three centuries' evolution of an Elizabethan tune, but one of the most curious modifications in effect is that of the jovial Elizabethan dance-melody called at first 'Quodling's delight,' and, in the seventeenth century, 'Goddesses'—

No. 104.  
(Fast)



into the pathetic eighteenth-century tune so well known as 'The Oak and the Ash.' Mere change of pace, apart from anything else, can produce startling transformations; 'Admiral Benbow,' one of the most delightfully rollicking of the later folk-tunes (its date is about 1700)—

No. 105.  
[With spirit]





is also known as a religious carol,<sup>1</sup> 'The Land o' the Leal' is simply 'Scots wha hae' sung slowly, and indeed no sort of fixed emotional character ever seems to have attached to these melodies, which were, from every point of view, common property.

The triple division into lyrical songs, narrative ballads, and tunes mainly connected with dancing (though possibly vocal in origin), meets us in the folk-music of every nation; but there are no rigid lines of demarcation between the three. In English music, ancient as was the custom of ballad-singing by harper and minstrel, ballad-tunes (in the strict sense of the word) are later than the other two kinds; whatever early specimens may have existed have been lost, and the ballads so popular in the sixteenth century were chiefly sung to tunes originally intended for lyrics or dances. We have already referred to the possibility that the melodies of 'Sumer is i-cumen in' and the Agincourt song may, in virtue of the melodic and rhythmical directness of style<sup>2</sup> they exhibit, be examples of ancient folk-tunes; and on a parchment leaf forming the cover of a manuscript collection of statutes of Edward I, now in the Bodleian Library, we have a lengthy dance-measure, entirely monophonic except for a few notes at the end, and strongly though variously rhythmical in character, but without any particular melodic interest. But it is not till about the beginning of the sixteenth century that we see something like a regular literature of folk-music; no doubt such existed continuously in earlier times, but there was little chance of its preservation in permanent form till the trained composers began to apply themselves to secular as well as to ecclesiastical work, and to vie with one another in exercising their skill in the embellishment of favourite popular melodies.

The gap was bridged by the carols, which meet us continually in fifteenth-century MSS., and to which reference

<sup>1</sup> The *English Hymnal* (1906) is full of such transformations, to which there is really no objection—the student of the great German chorale-melodies, for example, knows of many similar instances. After all, the music is the thing; and fine tunes are well worth having on any terms.

<sup>2</sup> These are essential elements of all folk-music; but directness need not in the least imply anything like squareness or obtrusive symmetry.

has already been made<sup>1</sup>; they differ in no essentials from contemporary secular pieces, but they were set, it would appear, far more frequently. Towards the year 1500 the phrases become more and more balanced and organized, as we see in such tunes as 'Nowell, nowell' (familiar to-day in what as a rule is a somewhat modernized shape) or the still more beautiful 'As I lay upon a night'—

No. 106.

As I lay up - on a nyght, For sothe I  
sawe a seme - ly syght, I be - held a berde so  
bryght, A child she bare on honde.

and simultaneously we find for the first time (at least in any profusion) melodies to secular words which bear the impress of folk-music. The earliest of these, such as 'Ah, the sighs that come from my heart', 'Western wind', 'Blow thy horn, hunter', 'I have been a foster',<sup>2</sup> 'The little pretty nightingale', diverse as they are in style, nevertheless show many qualities in common. All (except 'Blow thy horn, hunter', and that has a sort of little supplementary codetta of a different kind) end with a decorative cadence, the last word of the poetry being extended beyond the normal rhythmical limit: sometimes, as in 'The little pretty nightingale'—

No. 107.

[Moderately fast]

The ly - tyll pre - ty nygh - tyn - gale A - mong the le - uys  
grene, I wolde I were wyth hur all  
nyght, . . But yet ye wote not whome I mene.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter ii. Sometimes the tunes may have been the composition of the arrangers, sometimes not; we have no evidence either way.

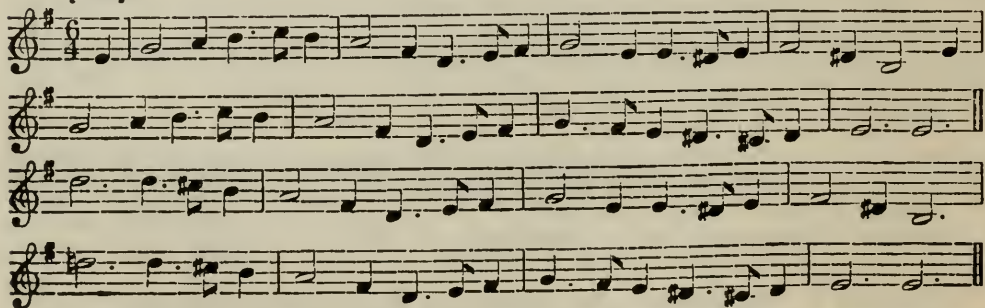
<sup>2</sup> Forester.



we find this vocalized extension also at the end of the second line of the verse. It is true that a good many of these early tunes are rather vague and colourless; but the best of them (and not a few are of really high quality) show somewhat remarkable appreciation of the sentiment of the words—‘Ah, the sighs,’ in particular, is singularly pathetic in expression—and a melodic distinction which ‘composers’ music’ in England had, save for a few phrases of Dunstable, hitherto not even tentatively approached. The MSS. present these tunes sometimes unaccompanied, sometimes set in plain vocal harmony with the melody in the tenor, sometimes in the form of what is known as ‘broken plainsong,’ the melody being expanded in rhythm and occasionally interspersed with rests, the whole forming a more or less elaborate concerted vocal composition of the old type of descant<sup>1</sup>: the instrumental settings came into vogue rather later.

The Elizabethan age was as prolific in folk-tunes as in everything else; music seems to have been greatly in vogue among the lower as well as the upper classes, and the dramatists are constantly alluding to popular melodies by name. Shakespeare, for example, mentions ‘Sick, sick’, ‘Fortune my foe’, ‘Light o’ love’, ‘Calen o custure me’ (an English tune, though with a pseudo-Irish name), ‘Whoop, do me no harm, good man’, ‘Heart’s ease’, ‘Come o’er the bourne, Bessy’, ‘Peg-a-Ramsey’, and others, including the rollicking tune of which Mrs. Ford (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, ii, 1) says ‘they (i. e. Falstaff’s words and deeds) do no more adhere and keep pace together than the Hundredth Psalm to the tune of Green-sleeves’—

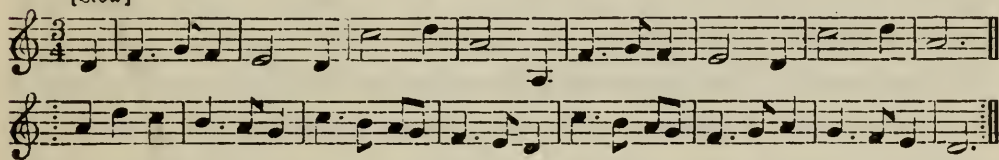
No. 108.  
[Fast]



<sup>1</sup> Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the masses by Tye, Shepherd, and Taverner on the ‘Western wind’ tune.

and such fragments of popular poetry as those in *Hamlet* or *The Winter's Tale* were no doubt sung by Ophelia or Autolycus to their proper tunes, which are still in existence. Very many tunes of extremely fine quality, including some still well-known like 'The three ravens' or 'The hunt is up', date from this time; we find indeed all kinds, some beautifully expressive and rhythmically flexible like 'Now the spring is come' or 'Bonny sweet Robin'—

No. 109.  
[*Slow*]



some buoyantly vigorous like 'Lord Willoughby' or perhaps the most contemporaneously popular of all tunes, 'Sellenger's Round' (a singularly perfect example of a Mixolydian superficially resembling a major-scale melody)—

No. 110.  
[*Fast*]



But, whatever the style, nearly all later sixteenth-century folk-tunes show a singular vitality of utterance; and for the first half of the next century the bulk of such music still has more or less the same qualities. Very many tunes are still purely modal, and some, such as 'The woods so wild' or 'Come o'er the bourne, Bessy'—Mixolydian tunes with a strong balance towards F major—are very probably of earlier date than their first occurrence in Elizabethan collections.<sup>1</sup>

The folk-melodies, for which our earliest documentary evidence dates between 1650 and 1800, are, as a rule, of

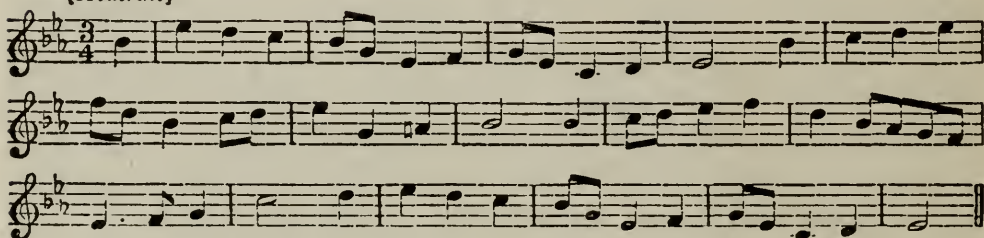
<sup>1</sup> See p. 30.



a different character; we find them in great profusion in numerous collections of contemporary popular songs and dances (the most voluminous being Playford's *The Dancing Master*, which was first brought out in 1650, and was reprinted in enlarged forms eighteen times down to 1728), in the ballad operas, and in the common broadsides. Many older melodies were, however, continually being reprinted, usually in more or less different and inferior shapes; and we are, in fact, largely driven back on internal evidence in estimating the date of any particular example. It is easy, nevertheless, to see a gradual weakening of the type; the increasing neglect of the modal tonalities means a loss of variety, and there is a decline in melodic and rhythmic inspiration. But, less notable though the general average is, we still find a large number of very fine tunes with a vital character all their own, such as, to take a casual handful, 'Come, lasses and lads', or 'Here's a health unto his majesty', or 'Down among the dead men', or 'Pretty Polly Oliver'—a model of graceful melodic curve—

No. 111.

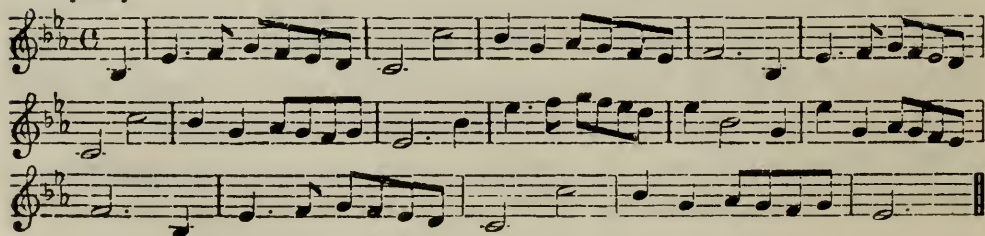
[Moderat.]



or two, in their very different ways, equally splendid tunes from *The Dancing Master*, both of which, in the absence of any known accompanying words, seem to have dropped into oblivion, 'Portsmouth'—

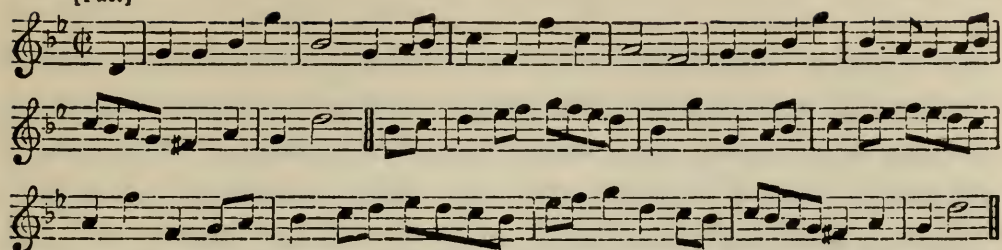
No. 112.

[Slow]



and 'Pall Mall'—

No. 113.  
[Fust]



What many people call 'typical English tunes'—sturdy, swinging, healthy, but rather insensitive melodies like 'The Vicar of Bray'—occur by shoals during the eighteenth century; as also do others of the softer and (using the word in a good sense) more sentimental kind, which are now best known through their offspring in the works of Arne.

Traditional English melodies for which we have nothing but nineteenth-century (or, it may be, twentieth-century) evidence, are of all sorts and shapes. Reference has already been made to the general features which they bear in common with other British folk-music; but the caution against dogmatic judgements of date and origin applies to them more than to any of the rest. Though some of our oldest folk-tunes are in the plain major scale, yet, probably, the more strongly modal the tune, the earlier it is likely to be; and where definitely modal tonality is found together with melodic *fiorituri* common in sixteenth-century folk-music but not later, there is at any rate a presumption that the tune is of considerable antiquity.<sup>1</sup> But all such speculations must necessarily be more or less conjectural, in the absence of any datable evidence; it is quite possible that, in remoter parts of the country, lovers of the older style may have retained the older types longer.

But historical doubts need not hinder us from enjoying the music that, within the last ten years or so, has begun to pour in upon us from all parts of England. Much of it has not, save in the eyes of enthusiasts beyond the reach of argument, any particular artistic merit, except that of clean unaffectedness; but we find all shades of gradation from the kind of tune that any capable and healthily-minded musician could

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the picturesque Dorian 'Bristol Town' (Folk-song Society's Journal, vol. iv).



produce at the rate of a dozen an hour<sup>1</sup> up to a mass of really splendid melodies like the Dorian 'The ship in distress' or the Aeolian Irish-like 'Farewell, Nancy' (both in *Somerset Folk-songs*, vol. iii), or, in different volumes of the Folk-song Society's Journal, 'Salisbury Plain' (Aeolian), 'Brigg fair' (Dorian), 'As I walked out one May morning' (Aeolian), 'Covent Garden' (Aeolian), or indeed many more, with, at a rather lower melodic level, a large number of charmingly piquant and pointed things like 'The wraggle-taggle gipsies' (*Somerset Folk-songs*, vol. i), 'My Johnny was a shoemaker' (*English County Songs*), or 'The bobtailed mare' (Folk-song Society's Journal, vol. iv). The musician of to-day cannot live by folk-songs alone; but the more we realize how the power of writing really great melodies seems to be vanishing beyond the reach or even beyond the wishes of most twentieth-century composers, the more we should be grateful for these finely-voiced echoes from a less sophisticated world.

The folk-tunes of the counties at either of the extreme ends of England show certain features of their own. There is an historically close connexion between the Cornish and Irish races; and the best-known of Cornish folk-songs—the very charming 'Where be going'—has, though it retains a definite individuality of style, a distinctively Celtic lilt that is also noticeable in greater or less degree in other tunes from the same district. In Northumbria, on the other hand, we find, as is natural, a close approximation to the Lowland Scottish type; 'John Peel' (an old border tune originally known as 'Where will bonnie Annie lie') is no doubt English enough, but on the other hand 'The Keel Row' is equally Scottish, and the great majority of the tunes in Stokoe and Reay's large collection of *Songs of Northern England* show (when they possess distinctive qualities at all, as very many of them entirely fail to do) strong affinities for their still more northern neighbours. Beautiful melodies like 'Bonny at morn' or 'Sair fyel'd, hinny' are, both in sentiment and in technical features,<sup>2</sup> inseparable from a tune like that quoted later

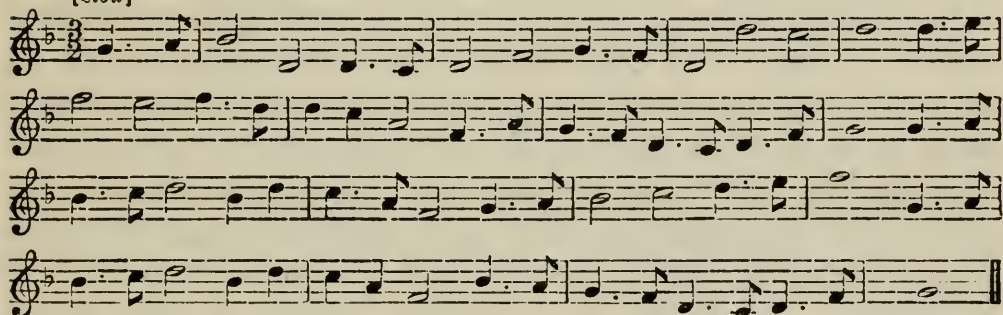
<sup>1</sup> Of course the enthusiasts deny this; but it would be interesting to try experiments on them.

<sup>2</sup> Both are pure Aeolian; I take the artistically impossible sharp seventh on the penultimate note of the latter to be a misprint.

from the other side of the Cheviots, 'I'll bid my heart be still'.

The Island of Man is a little world of its own in language, and its folk-music, though much mixed with outside influences, has certain individual characteristics. It is, as a rule, somewhat melancholy in mood, and has a special partiality for the Dorian scale; the structure which repeats the same two strains for the first and fourth, and for the second and third lines is very frequent. There is much in collections of Manx music that fails to create any marked impression, and there are many approximations to Irish methods; but still tunes like the familiar passionate and majestic 'Mylecharane' and the less-known beautiful Dorian 'The sheep under the snow'—

No. 114.  
[Slow]



have a tinge of expression not exactly paralleled elsewhere in the British Islands.

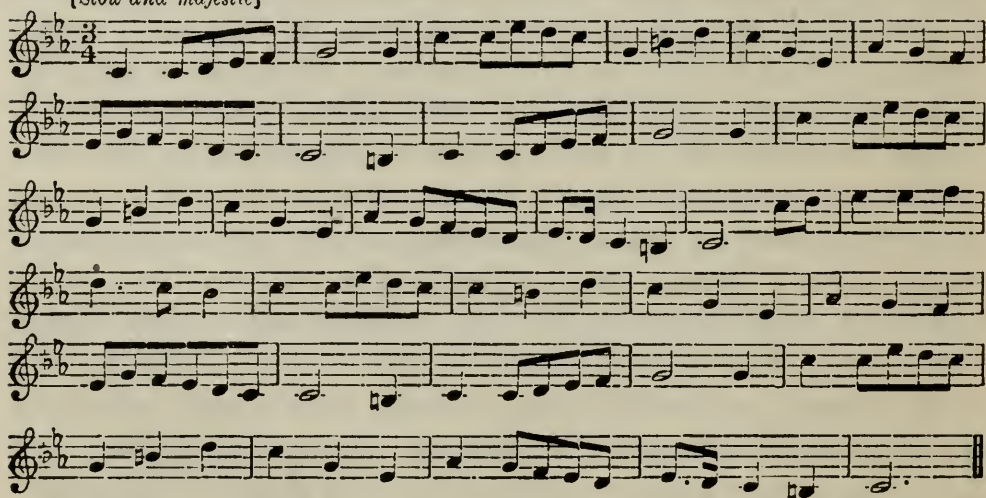
Considerably the least artistically interesting of the four large departments of British folk-music is that contributed by the Welsh people. As we have seen in chapter i, music was cultivated in Wales to a relatively advanced degree in quite early times; and the old quasi-official status of the art in the national life is still preserved, in what to the non-Welshman seems a curiously quaint and artificial fashion, in the ceremonies of the 'Eisteddfod'. But we have, until comparatively recent times, practically nothing but mere legend on which to rely for any definite facts about Welsh music; and there is no sort of reason for yielding to the blandishments of enthusiastic natives, who would claim an eighth-century date for the tune of 'Morva Rhuddlan', and the status of 'the most ancient specimen of music in existence' for some tablature for the Crwth, first noted in a MS. of the



time of Charles I. Welsh folk-music stands in a very unusual position in showing hardly any examples of modal melodies<sup>1</sup>; nearly all are in the ordinary pure major or minor keys. This fact does not by any means necessarily imply that they are more modern than other folk-tunes; but it is hard to deny the presence of a more or less sophisticated tone about all but the really finest specimens. Tunes of the very frequently recurring type of 'Jenny Jones' or 'The Ash Grove' ('Llwyn onn'), with their politely complacent rhythm and their rather colourless arpeggio-like phrases, are not really, in spite of their fresh cleanness, of any artistic importance; these and many others show a certain lack of sensitiveness of style that we do not find nearly so often in the folk-melodies of England and Scotland and very rarely indeed in those of Ireland—they are much more akin to those of the western continental nations. But still Welsh music is individual enough, even in its artistic faults; its typical melodies are easily differentiated from those of other races. Characteristic features are a fondness for triple time, an avoidance of rhythmical organization save of the very simplest nature, an emotional expressiveness of a direct and slightly heavy kind, a certain monotony of invention; yet Wales has produced plenty of fine tunes, though of a somewhat limited range. The slow, steady, majestic swing of the melody known as 'The red piper' is an inspiration of really great power--

No. 115.

[*Slow and majestic*]



<sup>1</sup> The fine Dorian 'Britain's Lament' is a notable exception.

and, similarly, melodies such as 'Morva Rhuddlan' or 'David of the white rocks' or 'Ton-y-Botel' (a very noble specimen of a traditional hymn-tune) are marked by artistic strength of a high order. And again, in the tenderer vein, we have the beautiful 'Gwenith Gwyn'—

No. 116.

[Moderately slow]



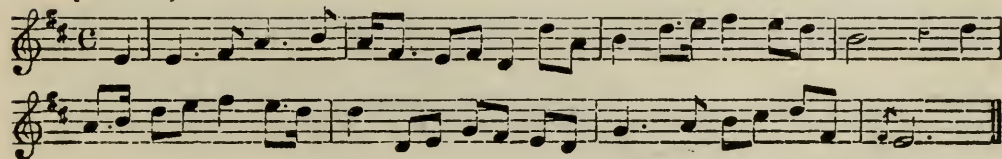
and others of the same general type, such as 'All through the night', or 'The Blackbird'—a charmingly graceful tune in five-bar rhythm; and many more might be mentioned. But still, taking Welsh music as a whole, it lacks subtlety; and we cannot avoid drawing unfavourable deductions from the fact that it has admitted into its national song-literature a miserably feeble effusion like Brinley Richards' 'God bless the Prince of Wales' and the hardly less commonplace modern patriotic anthem 'Land of my fathers'.

Scottish folk-music consists of two parts, that of the Lowlands and that of the Highlands; being the products of different races, they show different characteristics, though, as in all British folk-music, one style slides into the other by infinitesimal gradations. Beyond the borders of Scotland, the Lowland tunes bear the greatest affinity to the English, the Highland to the Irish.

Lowland folk-tunes are very largely modal, the favourite scale being the Aeolian, though two fine specimens, 'The Brume o' the Cowdenknowes' and 'Wae's me for Prince Charlie', are respectively Dorian and Mixolydian—

No. 117.

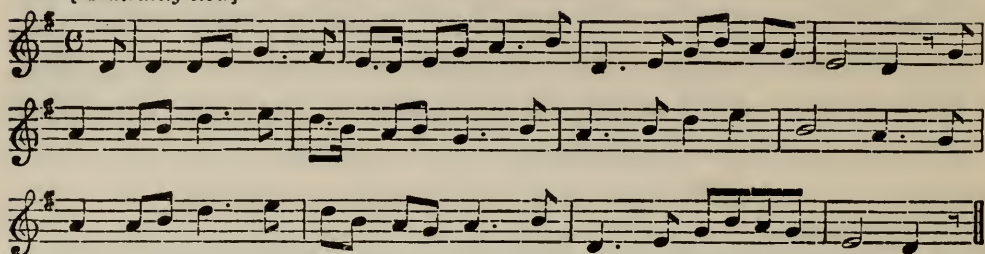
[Moderate]





No. 118.

[Moderately slow]



This latter is an early eighteenth-century version of a rather less organized tune, 'Lady Cassilis' Lilt', that is found in the Skene MS. of some hundred years earlier date—a collection of songs and dances (written in lute tablature) that is the oldest extant trustworthy authority for Scottish music, though it contains English tunes as well. Of the Aeolian melodies there may perhaps be quoted the wonderfully organized 'Katherine Ogie'—

No. 119.

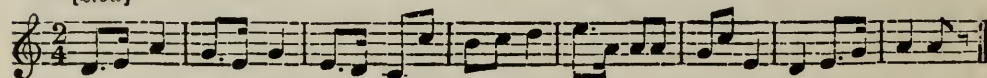
[Moderate]



the subtly picturesque 'Ca' the yowes'—

No. 120.

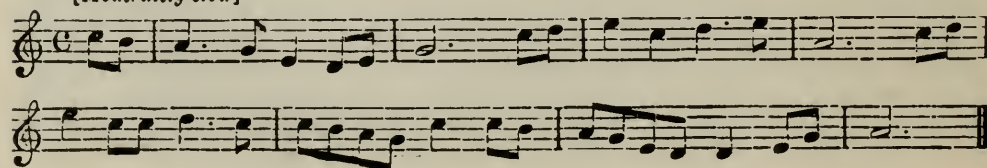
[Slow]



and a very expressive Border tune known to the words 'I'll bid my heart be still' (and to many others also)—

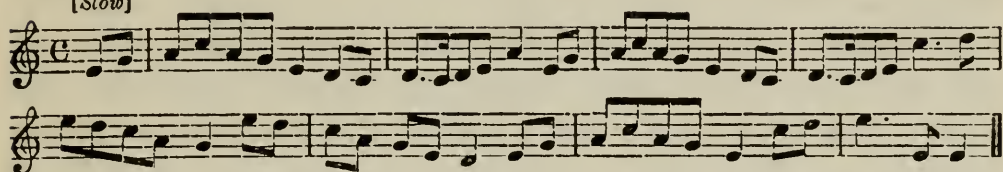
No. 121.


[Moderately slow]



and the pure major scale, which is not very common, is found in one of the most ancient and most beautiful of all, the familiar 'Ay, waking, O!', as well as in 'The twa sisters o' Binnorie', a noble specimen of a rare type of half-declamatory, half-lyrical tune of extended compass. Pentatonic tunes, based on a scale containing only five notes, are not—in spite of many random assertions on the subject—of very frequent occurrence<sup>1</sup>; the very beautiful original form of 'Gala Water'<sup>2</sup> is a specially good example, and another is found in the ancient air 'The bridegroom grat'—

No. 122.  
[Slow]



This last example may serve to introduce a brief digression on the curious vicissitudes which the conception of Scottish music has undergone, quite apart from the natural fusion of one country's style with another's, that we are always finding in our examination of British folk-tunes. This particular tune was fitted by Lady Anne Lindsay to the words of her 'Auld Robin Gray', but it has now been completely supplanted by a nineteenth-century English production of vastly inferior quality; indeed, during the previous century the deliberate manufacture of Scottish tunes was a favourite industry with London composers. There was at the time a great fashion for them; but they were, as a rule, hopelessly mangled by the wholesale addition of the so-called 'Scottish snap'—the  rhythm—which is of very rare occurrence in the old genuine versions,<sup>3</sup> and Hook and many others (including Mrs. Jordan the singer, the composer of 'The Bluebells of Scotland') turned out shoals of so-called 'Scottish songs', which were really entirely their own work. The same thing has indeed

<sup>1</sup> No doubt, however, they are considerably more frequent in Lowland Scotland than elsewhere in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> See Grove's *Dictionary*, iii. 444 (first edition).

<sup>3</sup> What is perhaps the best-known tune exemplifying this feature, 'Robin Adair,' is a bastard 'Scottish' version of a pure Irish song, 'Eileen aroon.'



been done on the further side of the Cheviots; we have Burns' own word for describing the neatly pentatonic 'Ye banks and braes of bonnie Doon' as the joint after-dinner concoction, for a mere joke, of a couple of Glasgow gentlemen, and the much more trivial 'Annie Laurie', which figures on most programmes as an old traditional tune, is the long-unavowed composition of Lady John Scott, who died as late as 1900.

The genuine Lowland music is however, as a rule, of very fascinating artistic quality. It is on the whole much the most at home in slow tunes, which are very often marked by a kind of severe but, nevertheless, tender beauty of an altogether exceptional order, that sets their unknown composers high among the lastingly remembered melodists; they are almost always, so to speak, tinted in shades of grey, but the colour is of the purest. Quick melodies of the type of 'Jenny Nettles' or 'The Piper of Dundee', again, are marked by a sort of fine delicately sparkling gaiety that is not visible elsewhere; but real notable distinctiveness is not perhaps so common as among the slower tunes. Certain qualities, such as the broad calm happiness of some of the English melodies, or the fiery majesty of some of the Irish, we do not see; when the Lowland folk-music tends towards the straightforwardly placid, as, for example, in 'Afton Water' and others of a similar character, the inspiration burns rather fitfully and the tools seem blunted, and the intensely vivid Irish imagination, which blazes in such outbursts as the melody of 'Avenging and bright falls the bright sword of Erin', finds only a dim reflection in the Jacobite songs.

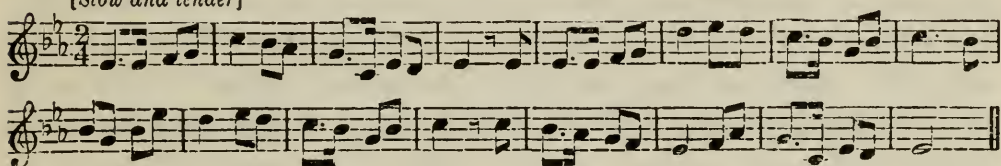
The Highland Gaelic folk-music is certainly more versatile in mood, though it does not equal the special excellences of the Lowland; it is on the whole more primitive, so to speak, in expression, and has, combined with a certain spirituality of its own, something of the Irish power of direct utterance of nearly all the great simple emotions, though it is less sensuously beautiful in melodic outline. Sometimes the tunes are curiously rugged in form, wandering on in more or less vague rhythm from one phrase to the next, as for example in this fine half-barbaric North Highland tune 'Och o ro u'—

No. 123.

*[Slow and majestic]*

and even when the rhythmical structure is more balanced, there will often be a good deal of irregularity of detail. Tunes like these, which are formally quite unlike any others found in the British islands, give the impression of considerable antiquity, though we have little or no direct evidence on which to lean; but on the other hand we equally often find pure Gaelic tunes which are artistically balanced as finely as the best Irish specimens, as, for example, the beautiful melody now best known to the modern words 'Mo chailin dileas donn'—

No. 124.

*[Slow and tender]*

or the massively picturesque pentatonic 'A chuachag nan craobh' ('O cuckoo of the grove')—

No. 125.

*[Slow and expressive]*

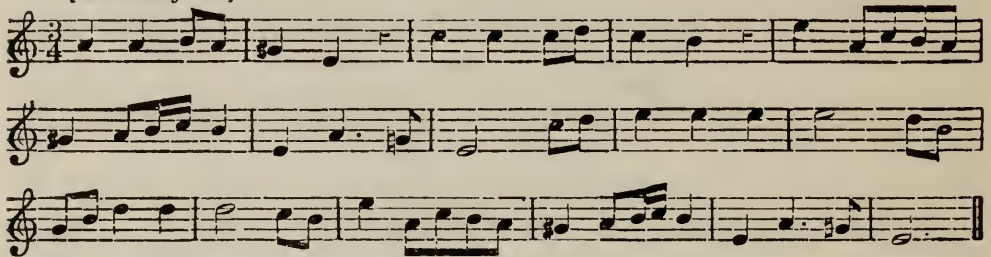
Another very fine stern pentatonic tune (omitting the third and seventh degrees of the scale, not, as here, the second and sixth) is the melody from the island of St. Kilda 'Cumha



Hirteach,' quoted in the 'Gesto' collection of Highland music; this is rather unlike the tunes of the mainland and the Hebrides, and the Orkney islands, again, have folk-melodies of a rather distinctive character, as for example 'Eleloro,' a special favourite of Scott—

No. 126.

[Moderately slow]



It will be seen that this last is a hexatonic tune, omitting one degree of the scale entirely; this is a particularly common characteristic in Highland music, and some very striking instances can be seen in the superb 'Laoidh Molaidh' ('Hymn of Praise'), 'Fear a Bhàta,' and the Hebridean 'Soraidh' ('Farewell')—all three included in Moffat's *Minstrelsy of Scotland*. Researches into Gaelic music have been a good deal too much left in the hands of enthusiastic but unscientific amateurs, and our knowledge of it is as yet not based on any very firm foundations; but there is no doubt that it is of very rich artistic value, and in many ways approximates more closely than any other extant folk-music to primitive conditions. In the remoter parts, townships still subsidize bards, often quite young men, who will write poetry and compose their own music, and go about the district performing it in the style that has been familiar for centuries; but naturally this custom does not survive in the more 'civilized' localities.

The real traditional Highland instrument is a kind of jew's-harp; the bagpipes were introduced later, and it was only in the eighteenth century that Scottish dance-music was rendered on the violin by Neil Gow and his school, many of whom were also composers. Old Laments, Reels, Strathspeys, &c. exist in profusion: many of the finest, especially the frequently very passionate and beautiful Laments, were very probably originally vocal, but the many quick dance-tunes, both Scottish and Irish, that are virtually exclusively based on the notes of of an alternating couple of triads (the lower one invariably

major) separated by the interval of a tone, were no doubt designed from the start for the special scale of the pipes—though the style was obviously adaptable to other instruments and is indeed occasionally found in the dance-music of England, as in the ‘Cobbler’s Hornpipe’ (quoted in Wooldridge’s *Old English Popular Music*).

The Irish temperament is peculiarly prone to patriotism of a kind that is too enthusiastic to trouble itself overmuch about such mundane concerns as facts; and in this amiable weakness most native writers on Irish music have their share. Thus ‘Sumer is i-cumen in’ has, it would appear, been stolen from the Irish melody ‘The summer is coming’ (joined by Moore to the words ‘Rich and rare were the gems she wore’)—though only the first four notes are in the least degree similar, and we first hear of it five hundred and fifty years after the time of John of Fornsete. Power, again, who was perhaps an Anglo-Irishman, has to be claimed, without the slightest evidence, as the earliest and most distinguished member of the first British school—apparently because it is *a priori* intolerable that he should have to be ousted by a mere Englishman like Dunstable; and we are given to understand that ‘The Coolin’ (adapted by Moore to the words ‘Though the last glimpse of Erin’), a beautiful tune the first documentary evidence of which occurs in the late eighteenth century, probably dates from the year 1296 or 1297 ‘inasmuch as it must have been composed not long after the passing of the Statute, 24th of Edward I, in 1295, which forbade the degenerate English in Ireland to imitate the native Irish by allowing their hair to grow in “coolins”’.<sup>1</sup> But we need not rely on arguments of this very doubtful type to show that Ireland has had a musically distinguished history. In the first chapter of this book we have noted evidence of the early artistic proficiency of the Irish race; and there seems no doubt that for some hundreds of years Irish minstrelsy was considerably more cultured and advanced and at the same time more honoured and appreciated than similar developments on the other side of St. George’s Channel. But there has never been a composer of Irish blood resident in Ireland who has

<sup>1</sup> Grattan Flood, *History of Irish Music*, p. 87.



produced any sustained artistic work of noteworthy character ; and about the folk-music itself we have no ground for historical dogmatism. We know nothing whatever about the harmony (if any) employed by the mediaeval harpers, nor have we any definite evidence that the tunes we know now existed in the same forms prior to their earliest documentary appearances—not, at any rate, so much as to carry any melody further back than the ancient English tunes of 1500 or thereabouts. The so-called Irish tunes in the *Fitzwilliam Virginal Book* are generally held to be English ; and our next written evidence is not till 1720. We have a few passing references ; an extract from the Talbot Papers of 1602 tells us of the great popularity at Elizabeth's court of Irish tunes (several of which are indeed referred to by Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>), and Spenser, who was in Ireland between 1581 and 1584, notes various facts about the native music, especially the customary ornamentation of simple melodies—a habit which largely prevailed till the close of the eighteenth century. But we are thrown back virtually entirely on the folk-music itself, of much of which the actual composers are definitely discernible ; O'Carolan, a famous itinerant harper (1670–1738), wrote many of the best-known Irish melodies, including the fine 'Princess Royal' dance-tune that has often been attributed to Shield, having (under the title of 'The Arethusa') been transferred to one of the latter's ballad operas, along with other alien matter, according, as we have already seen, to the general custom of the time.

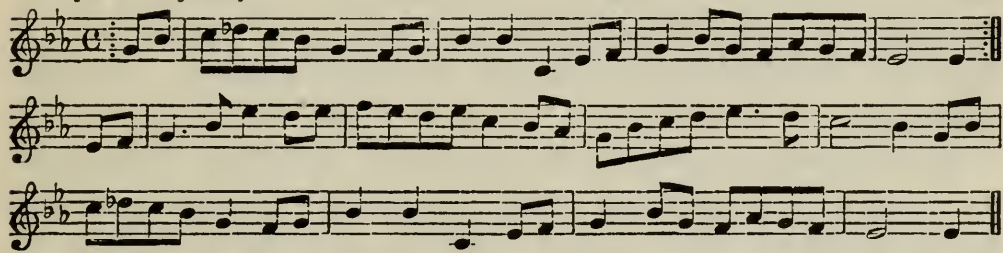
Few musicians have been found to question the assertion that Irish folk-music is, on the whole, the finest that exists ; it ranges with wonderful ease over the whole gamut of human emotion from the cradle to the battlefield, and is unsurpassed in poetical and artistic charm. If musical composition meant nothing more than tunes sixteen bars long, Ireland could claim some of the very greatest composers that have ever lived ; for in their miniature form the best Irish folk-tunes are gems of absolutely flawless lustre, and though of course some of them are relatively undistinctive, it is very rare to meet with one entirely lacking in character. Of late years the

<sup>1</sup> Grattan Flood (*History of Irish Music*, pp. 169–77) quotes nine ; but for some of these the evidence seems insufficient.

publication of numerous collections of arrangements by Stanford and others, and of the huge mass of melodies transcribed in the middle of the last century by Petrie, has attracted special attention to this field; and there is no branch of folk-music which has been investigated with more artistic thoroughness. Nearly all Irish tunes show a singular sensitiveness of feeling; it is true that frequently they do not seem emotionally to fit the words with which they were in their earliest days connected<sup>1</sup> (Moore, on the other hand, had a wonderful genius for writing round the essential elements in an older tune), but as mere successions of notes without words of any kind they are full of a subtle vitality which can give delicate and distinctive sparkle to more or less humorous dance-measures of no particular melodic loftiness, and also rise to such strains as 'It is not the tear' (originally 'The sixpence')—a wonderful example of what can be crowded into a restricted structural scheme—

No. 127.

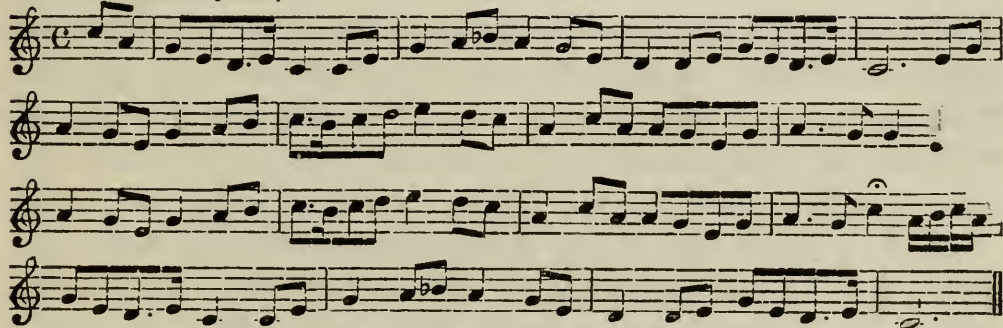
[Moderately slow]



or 'If all the sea were ink'—a magnificently majestic and solemn march to which Moore's 'Lay his sword by his side' is exactly suited—

No. 128.

[Slow marching time]



<sup>1</sup> Here, once again, we drop on a fact that is always turning up in musical history—that, when great music is involved, the words are, on the whole, a merely secondary consideration. Almost all the great classical composers exemplify this over and over again.



or the tune generally known as 'Emer's farewell to Cucullain,' with an emotionally organized design of quite exceptional power—

No. 129.

[Moderately slow]



After all, for sheer beauty of melody, the works of Mozart, Schubert, and the Irish folk-composers form a triad that is unchallenged in the whole range of the art; deeper tunes have been written by still greater men, but these particular inspirations show a flawless spontaneity of utterance, an instinctive feeling for loveliness and dignity of phrase as such, that we do not find elsewhere in anything like the same profusion.

In form, as well as in melody, the best Irish folk-music is exceptionally polished. We very rarely<sup>1</sup> find the somewhat luxuriant flexibility of metre that is far from infrequent in Highland melodies and not at all unknown in English; even balanced structures such as those of the exquisite 'The Dove' (Petrie collection, No. 614) in three-bar rhythm, or 'One Sunday after Mass,' in which there is a two-bar refrain after each half of the tune, or 'Draherin O Machree' or 'Have you been at Carrick,' which consist of four sections of five bars each, or 'At the mid hour of night,' which has five five-bar phrases, are exceptional, and nearly all Irish melodies are built on an ordinary sixteen-bar framework subdivided into fours. But the phrases have a quite exceptional freedom from anything like either vagueness or stiffness of line; the melodies never tie themselves into knots, and the rhythmical basis is always firm and coherent. Sometimes, as in the beautiful

<sup>1</sup> No. 125 in the Petrie collection is an instance.

tune known as 'The Flight of the Earls' or 'The Boys of Wexford'—

No. 130.

[Moderate]



we have a sort of miniature epitome of sonata-form; indeed this structure may quite possibly have occurred for the first time in Irish folk-music, though in the default of exact dating we can never dogmatize. A distinctive feature that occurs in very many tunes is the reiteration of the key-note at the end of a phrase—a reiteration that is strictly melodic, and not, as in some Scottish tunes like 'There was a lad was born in Kyle', mainly due to the rhythmical exigencies of a dance-measure. Sometimes, as in the very graceful and tender tune familiar to the words 'My love's an arbutus', this reiterated note would seem to be the dominant of the key; but as a matter of fact the melodies which seem to show this exception are really Mixolydian, though (it may be) harmonized on Hypoionian lines in the major key a fourth higher. The feature shows itself not only in the ordinary major or Ionian key (in which, however, it seems most frequently to occur) but in the three other modes common in Irish music; a specially powerful example is seen in the well-known magnificent Aeolian tune 'Remember the glories of Brian the brave' or 'Molly M<sup>c</sup>Alpin.'



## CHAPTER XIII

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

As we have seen, it is to England that music primarily owes the development of euphonious harmony, and, through the influence started by Dunstable and extended by the great Flemings, arbitrary discord of the old haphazard kind was virtually extinct by the beginning of the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>; yet the extraordinary fact remains that for some two hundred years more some of the most supreme of English musicians clung blindly, in a spirit of reckless conservatism, to certain formulae which had served their time, and forcibly included them in the newer and more complex methods—whether they happened to fit or (as more usually, at any rate to our ears, was the case) they did not. An attempt at a short systematic treatment of this most interesting question is (even though it strike, so to speak, a more technical note than the rest of this book) the more necessary in view of its frequent obscurity by editorial vagaries, which have times without number resulted in the alteration—sometimes silent, sometimes with an airy reference to ‘obvious misprints’—of passages which, very strange as they sound, are quite certainly intentional. The fact that there is nothing in the European music of the last four hundred years, Strauss or any one else, which sets our teeth on edge so much as some things in the works of great geniuses like Tallis and Byrd and Gibbons and Purcell, may be a reason for not performing the works in which they occur, but is no reason for altering them as ‘mistakes’.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The wildly cacophonous example by one Piggott, quoted in Morley’s ‘Plain and Easy Introduction’, must be one of the latest instances; the student is advised to ‘seeke to please the eare as much as show cunning’—though what cunning Piggott shows is very hard to see.

<sup>2</sup> The works of Monteverde’s friend, the Prince of Venosa, who, in most histories, is held up as an ‘awful example’, are really nothing at all outlandish to modern ears; his famous madrigal ‘Moro lasso’ sounds, it is true, like late Wagner gone wrong, but it is, acoustically, perfectly tolerable to us, and should have been to the inarticulately angry Burney.

The ultimate origin of it all is what is known as 'Musica Ficta'. This extempore insertion of accidentals not indicated in the music was definitely sanctioned by the theorists of the earliest times of Descant for such purposes as avoiding progressions of augmented intervals, or securing sharpened leading-notes in cadences<sup>1</sup>; in the sixteenth century composers began to write these accidentals<sup>2</sup> in the music, and not, as formerly, leave them entirely to the judgement of the singer, which could hardly go wrong in the older work, but might easily do so in the newer style. But till about 1600 or so (and this is the great difficulty in the way of a systematization of harmonic methods) they did not proceed with any sort of regularity; sometimes the accidentals were inserted, sometimes not, and the only thing for us to do is, by the collation of a large number of instances, to try to form some general rules for our guidance in a kind of chaos rendered worse by the occasional occurrence of what are undoubtedly slips of the pen and misprints. However, with all other music than English, the task presents little difficulty; though now and then differences of opinion may legitimately exist, any editor who follows all the classical rules of 'musica ficta' will find that the results work out, wellnigh always, in a satisfactorily euphonious manner. In dealing with English music he will find nothing of the sort. It is true that 'musica ficta' was discontinued here considerably sooner than abroad, and that in published English music accidentals are almost always written out in detail; but our MSS. are in a haphazard way full of it, and the problems it there presents are identical with those set forth in the uncompromising plainness of print.

A few sixteenth-century Italian composers show, indeed, features similar to those mentioned here; but in England they occur so very much more frequently and so much later that we may justly describe them as specifically English.

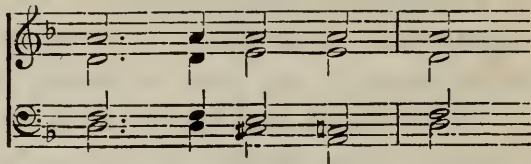
<sup>1</sup> Prosdocimus de Beldemandis, an early fifteenth-century theoretician (quoted in Stainer's *Dufay and his Contemporaries*, p. 33), is, in his extreme anxiety to secure as many semitonic cadences as possible, ready to allow a part to progress by the interval of an augmented fourth. But he stands in this respect absolutely alone; and it is more than doubtful if this licence was ever practised.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the elementary student may need a reminder that the raising of a flat is not, as now, indicated by a natural, but by a sharp.



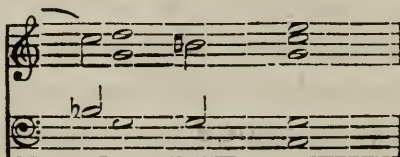
It is in what are called 'False Relations' that the crux lies. In the music of the Elizabethan age we find all possible kinds, from the ordinary

No. 131.



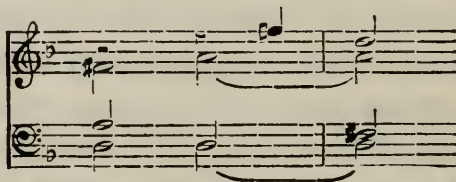
in Batten's anthem 'O praise the Lord', to this rather harsher example from Byrd's 'Sed tu, Domine', which, in one form or another, is of constant occurrence as a cadence-figure in English music down to Purcell and Blow—

No. 132.



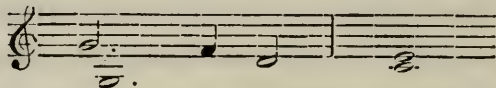
and, further, to this hideous instance from one of Byrd's 'Songs of sundry natures'—'Penelope that longed for the sight'<sup>1</sup>—

No. 133.



<sup>1</sup> Another example of the extreme use of a common custom can be seen in the English treatment of the old formula—

No. 134.



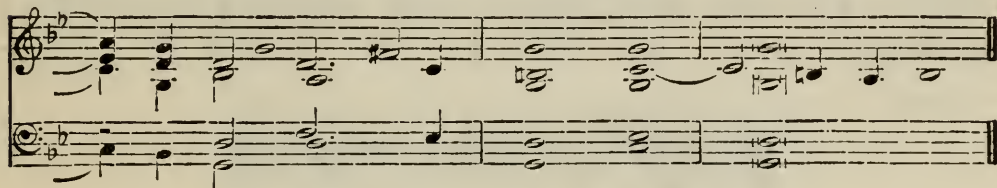
where the resolution of the F is obviously merely delayed. Gradually the phrase came exceptionally to be used without the discord resolving at all, and English composers ran riot with the exception, producing good results mixed with bad, as in this extract from the Te Deum of Gibbons' Service in F, which sounds all right except when the phrase is in the bass—

No. 135.



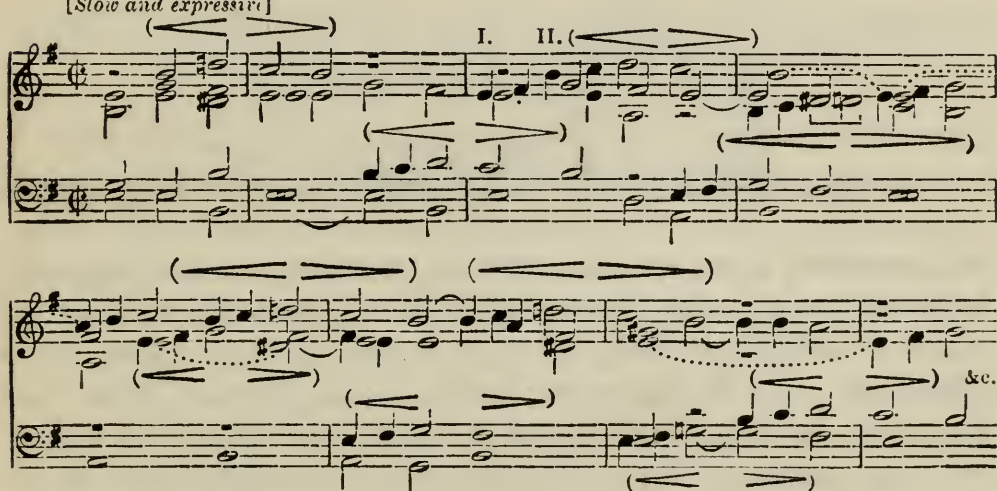
But the specially English feature is the very frequent simultaneous employment of 'False Relations' so that the major and minor thirds of the same root are sounded together; sometimes, as in the instance by Weelkes already quoted (at the end of the example on p. 89), the effect is very pathetic and beautiful, sometimes it is very interesting, but only bearable, perhaps, with a certain difficulty, as in the very expressive end of Tallis' 'Absterge, Domine'—an obvious extension of the cadence-figure just mentioned—

No. 136.



or in this also very expressive extract from the chorus 'For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God' occurring in the middle of Gibbons' fine anthem 'If ye be risen again with Christ' <sup>1</sup>—

No. 137.

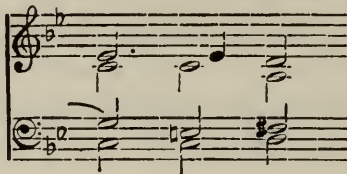
[*Slow and expressive*]

<sup>1</sup> Ouseley quaintly remarks: 'The composer has fallen into the error of attempting to represent the antagonism of the ideas of Life and Death by the use of discords utterly intolerable to modern ears'. Perhaps, however, the G sharp in the penultimate bar was not held long enough to clash with the G natural in the bass—at the end of a phrase, as here (and the same kind of passage occurs very often), the duration of the note is perhaps merely conventional.



and sometimes it is frankly horrible, as in such examples as this from the Benedictus of Farrant's Service in G minor—

No. 138.



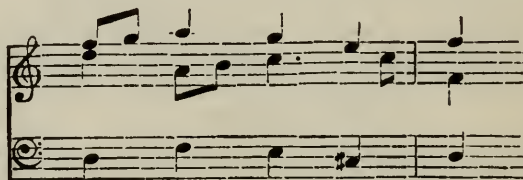
or this from the madrigal 'Ah cruel hateful fortune' by Kirbye, who, like Byrd, shows a great partiality for this kind of thing<sup>1</sup>—

No. 139.



or, in instrumental music, passages like this from No. 5 of Gibbons' Fantasies for three viols—

No. 140.

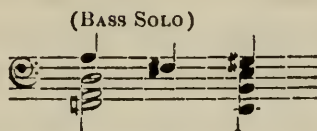


or numerous more or less similar passages in contemporary keyboard music—see, for example, the 'Voluntary' by Allwood which Hawkins printed, and many instances in the Fitzwilliam collection. Of the later composers, Child, Purcell, Wise, and Blow are the most partial to the style, and there are one or two final echoes of it in Croft's works (in the Te Deum of the Service in E flat, for example, or in the anthem quoted in chapter viii); Wise gives us the bare rudiments of the thing

<sup>1</sup> It is against all evidence to credit such passages to the personal initiative of Kirbye or Byrd, but it is curious how very many English composers seem to have been totally unaffected by this tendency. Tye is the earliest of the great men concerned; Croft the last.

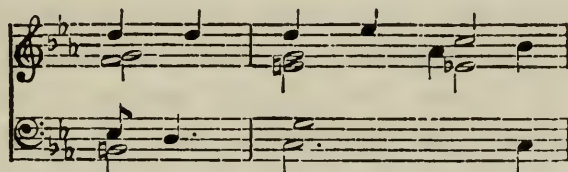
in this, from the bass solo in his anthem 'Awake, put on thy strength'—

No. 141.



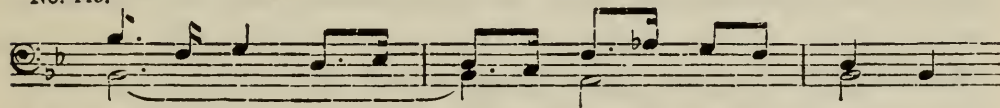
Child and Blow show numerous examples—the latter, indeed, is as partial to it as Byrd and Kirbye themselves—and in Purcell we find a considerable number of very curiously sounding specimens, like this from the five-part anthem ‘Lord, how long wilt thou be angry’—

No. 142.



or a very similar one in the eight-part anthem 'O praise God in his holiness' (to the singularly inappropriate words 'Praise him on the well-tuned cymbals')—

No. 143.



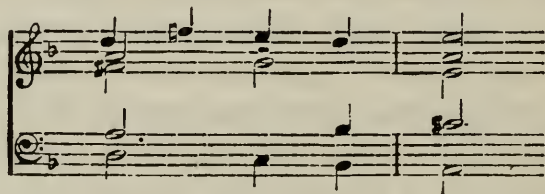
Things like these are quite different in kind from the rather ugly consecutive sevenths of the Restoration composers, and other little harmonic mannerisms with which the musical historian meets more or less frequently; and it does not help matters much to argue that, with a system of unequal temperament, they would sound a fraction less curious, nor to throw out despairing suggestions that perhaps we do not quite understand the notation<sup>1</sup>. Nor can we, in a gallant radicalism, alter everything so as to make it sound well from our own point of view; sometimes only a very slight alteration is needed, and in those cases it is quite possible that such may

<sup>1</sup> Davey, *History of English Music*, p. 167. He refers for support to an early theoretical treatise of William Bathe (1564-1614); but my own examination of this curious and very rare little book has not enabled me to throw any light on the matter—on which, so far as I can see, Bathe's remarks have no direct bearing.



have been made by performers whose ears dominated their reason,<sup>1</sup> but very many other cases, exactly similar in essentials, refuse to be altered except by a process of upsetting the music right and left. Nor, again, can we, in a gallant purism, consistently decline to supply any accidentals whatever to a MS.; the frequent result is that the music seems right from no point of view at all. No doubt, when the awkward passage is got over at a good speed, the effect is only transient, and anyhow it sounds less harsh on voices than on instruments; still, when all has been said, some explanation is necessary. And, indeed, after a sufficiently extensive acquaintance, we begin to see that there is really at the bottom of it all a definite system, quite tenable, at any rate, from the point of view of history and science; and the very minute handful of cacophonous passages which cannot be included under it can be left to be examined each on its own merits, and relegated, if we think fit, to the category of slips of the pen or misprints, the existence of which nobody denies. This principle is very simple, being nothing more than the rigid retention by each part of its own independent scale-scheme, including (in the earlier period) an absolute rejection of augmented intervals<sup>2</sup> and the substitution of the major for the minor third (the *tierce de Picardie*) at what are, from the point of view of the individual part, the cadences. Sometimes, it is true, we shall be led to make matters aesthetically rather worse than they were before, as in this passage from Milton's 'If that a sinner's sighs', quoted as it stands in Arkwright's *Old English Edition*—

No. 144.



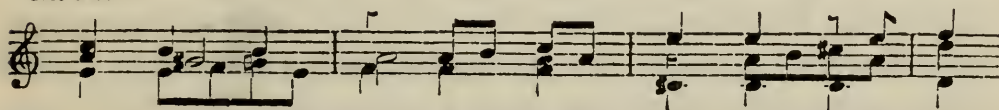
where a B natural in the tenor, though highly unpleasant, is compulsory. But the principle is in itself a perfectly simple

<sup>1</sup> Though in reading at sight for the first time from single part-books they obviously could not know what was coming.

<sup>2</sup> The example in the alto part of Wilbye's 'Love me not for comely grace', though reprinted in the Musical Antiquarian Society's edition, is palpably a press error due to the omission of a flat.

and natural extension, on the strict old classical lines, of the doctrine of horizontalism that is the foundation of artistic music; it seems to afford a firm basis of explanation of what, aesthetically, is often inexplicable, and sometimes, indeed, we almost seem to see the composer adopting it consciously, as in this extract from the *Più vivace* section of the overture to Blow's *Venus and Adonis*—

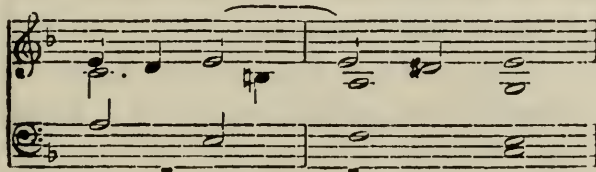
No. 145.



where the slight harshness of the first bar is explained by the fact that there, and in that bar alone, the scale-schemes of the two lower parts are necessarily in conflict.<sup>1</sup> As for the two and a half closely printed pages of 'Dr. Blow's crudities' which the usually amiable Burney indignantly sets forth, they may be divided into three fairly equal classes—things explicable on the above lines, other kinds of things, not altogether successful, but about which it is pedantic to trouble overmuch, and things that show really brilliant harmonic originality, rising at times to something like prophetic genius.

No doubt it is not always easy to see the true application of the principle; there are various doubtful places, for example, in the passage from Tye's 'Omnes gentes' quoted in chapter iii. Once or twice, indeed, the principle itself may seem to betray us, as in the well-known extract from Byrd's 'Civitas sancti tui' ('Bow thine ear')—

No. 146.



which stands thus in the printed part-books of 1589 and also in Barnard's collection; Boyce, in his reprint in his 'Cathedral Music', omitted the sharp, and has consequently—since the

<sup>1</sup> A passage in Purcell's anthem 'Out of the deep', where the ascending and descending melodic minor scales slowly grind against one another, is equally salient.



publication of the Musical Antiquarian Society's edition in 1842—drawn down on his head a storm of scholarly abuse, which (though he has plenty of genuine editorial sins to answer for) he hardly seems to deserve. My own examination of several contemporary manuscript copies provides no evidence for the D sharp in any of them, though accidentals are freely inserted in all, and the transcriber of the British Museum score of Barnard's part-books notes that it had been erased in ink in all but one of those that he had collated; it seems, indeed, quite arguable that it may be an error due to a mistaken impression that the phrase was a full close. It is, no doubt, anachronistic to dwell on the curiously out-of-place and sentimental effect which an augmented sixth, in the middle of music of this type, produces on most trained modern ears; its occurrence is quite conceivable, under certain circumstances, on the basis of the principle mentioned—which, indeed, is not by any means intended to exclude the possibility of hesitation about borderland cases of this and a few other kinds. All that is claimed is that it affords a working hypothesis for the artistic explanation of certain cacophonous features wellnigh peculiar to English music, which, though too often suppressed in reprints, are continually meeting the eye of the researcher among the original sources.

These characteristics, as will have been noticed, occur only at certain periods; and, indeed, the lack of steady continuity is one of the most striking features of English musical history. In all other countries the art has run a course which, whether one of progress or (as in a large portion of Italian history) of the reverse, has undergone normal developments, and has been unaffected by spasmodic rises and falls; in England, on the other hand, it has oscillated violently between extremes, or what may virtually be considered such. English music, as represented by 'Sumer is i-cumen in', stood alone in the thirteenth century, and, after a period of partial relapse, was in the very forefront of artistic endeavour in the first half of the fifteenth; then came another eclipse till Netherlandish influence aroused it to some seventy or eighty years of splendid activity (c. 1540–1620), during the whole of which time it poured forth works that could rank with the very greatest

of any contemporary foreign composers. Again there was a relative darkness till the Purcellian period, the brilliance of which owed its origin primarily to French and Italian methods; but this brief efflorescence of some twenty years, during which English music again at least equalled any written abroad, was followed by a long dark stretch till, this time under German influence, a new birth came in the later Victorian days. Not that any of these three foreign impulses denationalized the movements which they set on foot; they merely gave the stimulus, and our own composers worked out their own native styles for themselves. But, since the time of Dunstable, we have never reciprocated; unless we may be allowed to trace the influence of the nocturnes of Field (who, after all, spent most of his life abroad) on those of Chopin, no compositions by even the greatest men of English blood since the fifteenth century seem to have had any germinating force outside their own country. The greatest of the foreigners whom we have adopted sacrificed, when he set foot on English soil, all chance of guiding the course of continental music; we have taken freely from other nations, but we have not given back.<sup>1</sup>

This sort of isolation, due partly to insularity of position and partly to a certain insularity of temperament, has resulted in a curious ignorance among foreign musicians of even the finest English music. It is true that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries compositions by Englishmen living in their native country were occasionally reprinted abroad<sup>2</sup>; and we have, of course, in fairness to recollect that even now much of our most noteworthy work still remains in manuscript or in part-books practically unprocurable outside English libraries. But still, the complacent scorn with which the country of Byrd and Purcell has been almost universally

<sup>1</sup> The influence of early English instrumental music abroad was chiefly one of performance, not of composition.

<sup>2</sup> Este printed Morley's *Ballets* in Italian, for exportation, in 1595, the year of their first appearance in their original form; the same volume was also published, with German words, at Nuremberg in 1609, and later at Rostock and Cassel; and Hawkins mentions a reprint of Weelkes' madrigals at Halberstadt in 1619. Reference has been previously made to the numerous foreign issues of music by Englishmen temporarily or more or less permanently residing abroad.



treated up to very recent times is totally unpardonable. 'An English composer? no composer at all!' was, as Schumann acknowledges, the remark with which practically all Leipzig greeted Bennett; and some thirty years later still, Ambros, though not himself agreeing with the opinion that England is 'from the beginning of things to the present day an out-and-out unmusical country', quotes it as practically universally held in Germany. Indeed, Naumann, in his voluminously elaborate *Musikgeschichte* (1880-1885), gives exactly four astonishingly perfunctory pages (out of some twelve hundred) to the whole of English music, passing over, without the slightest mention, all Elizabethan church and madrigal composers and 'Sumer is i-cumen in' itself; and even a scholar like Nagel is apparently under the impression that our artistic life came to a total and permanent stop about the year 1700. It is only quite lately that this prejudiced ignorance is gradually disappearing as foreign musicians become better acquainted with the works of English composers, both ancient and modern.

One of the favourite taunts of continental criticism has been to assert that every English composer was merely an organist; and, while we might retort that the same could be said of Bach, it is no doubt true that ecclesiastical influences have played here a part that is altogether exceptional. We have never had any fixed and powerful secular tradition, either in opera or in the instrumental field; our religious music has always been something of our own, and fine as is the work we have produced in other departments, we have turned to them only spasmodically. It is true that at the present time the ecclesiastical hold is weakening very rapidly, and the younger school writes very little church music; but still an exceptional proportion of English musicians hold or have held, as conditions of livelihood, posts to which not all of them would have aspired had other channels, open to their foreign fellow-artists, been open to them also. The inferior composer of the quasi-clerical order has for nearly two hundred years been a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon product; other nations have known bad religious music, but they have not, like us, been deluged with it. Nor have they suffered, to anything like the same

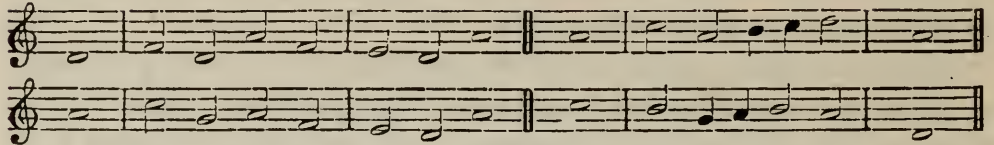
extent, from the application to artistic matters of totally non-artistic canons of judgement; it is only in England that musicianship has been really seriously hampered by the unmusical seekers after edification.

England, again, is the only country that can show a perfectly continuous output of hymn-tunes; magnificent tunes have been written elsewhere at various times, but the current has never, except here, run at all steadily. While on the one hand the English Reformation did a great disservice to art in causing the noble plainsong melodies to be one and all forgotten for over three hundred years by the whole community, except the small number of adherents of the older traditions, yet, on the other, it gave rise to a musical literature that was far from an unworthy substitute. The superb Lutheran chorales, though introduced to England as early as 1539 in Coverdale's *Ghostly Psalms*, never took root here, and have only, like the plainsong melodies, been revived during the last half-century or so; but the psalm-tunes owing their birth to western European, especially Genevan, Protestantism (not a few of which are very possibly adaptations of secular folk-melodies, as are some Lutheran chorales) were quickly assimilated into the national life, and some of the greatest musicians of both the mid-sixteenth century and the madrigalian period arranged them in parts for congregational use (the melody being, as a rule, placed in the tenor), and also imitated their style, more or less closely, in original compositions. We possess some splendid little masterpieces of this kind from the avowed pens of Tallis and Gibbons; but in most cases it is impossible for us to determine the real authorship of the tunes in the very numerous Psalters between Sternhold's in 1556 (in which the so-called 'English church tunes' first appear, in an unharmonized shape), and Playford's in 1677, the last of its kind—the arranger of a tune not previously met with may be also the composer, or he may not. All these melodies, many of which, such as the 'Old Hundredth', 'St. Mary', 'Winchester', 'London New', 'St. Michael', 'French or Dundee', 'Windsor', 'St. Flavian', the 'Old 137th', and plenty of others, are still happily very familiar, attain a very lofty standard of merit; and many also, like the



superb Dorian 'Martyrs', that we first find in the Scottish Psalter of 1635 <sup>1</sup>—

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and others showing equal grand sternness, have been more or less forgotten in the competition with hymn-tunes of a less uncompromising type. The different Psalters display varying methods of harmonization; that published in 1599 by Allison (and indeed entirely his own work) shows the Elizabethan style at its purest, but in the mixed collections known under the names of Day, Este, and Ravenscroft, and others as well, there is a steadily maintained artistic level, though some of the musicians who contributed were more at home in such tasks than were others. And until about the middle of the nineteenth century we still retained the power of producing distinguished music in this restricted field; the old 'church tunes' of doubtful authorship once left behind, we pass to the admirable work of Clarke and Croft, and on to that large literature of later eighteenth and early nineteenth century hymn-tunes of which, on the stronger side, Howard's 'St. Bride,' and on the softer, Miller's 'Rockingham' are typical examples, where in spite of a distinct declension of grandeur, and at times a certain partiality for over-decoration, the sentiment is still as a rule pure and dignified and the musicianship sound and clean. No doubt this later manner has but little of the melodic inventiveness and emotional force that were the glories of the older; but yet (even when we remember how some of the inferior eighteenth-century hymn-composers ran riot with 'polite' experiments in very doubtful taste) the rapid declension of hymn-writing after 1860 presents an astonishing contrast. We have already referred to the main features of later Victorian church music; and it is enough to say that the composers of hymn-tunes led

<sup>1</sup> The original forms of the old tunes have the long initial note; the modern even rhythm only came into use towards the end of the seventeenth century.

the way in the fall to the easy popularity of inferior sentimentalism.<sup>1</sup> But in this, as in other branches of ecclesiastical art, a wholesome reaction is now in full swing. Heroic and not altogether unsuccessful efforts are being made to oust the bad familiar tunes, and replace them by others more worthy of congregational affection<sup>2</sup>; and composers like Parry and Stanford, with some of the younger generation, have enriched English hymnody with tunes not unworthy of a place with the masterpieces of the past.

We must nevertheless remember that this purification consists to a large extent in the revival or introduction of fine old hymn-tunes of non-English origin—a cosmopolitanism possible in our less rigid rituals, but unfamiliar abroad. Indeed, there is no other country that has so cordially, throughout its whole artistic history, welcomed foreign music and musicians of all kinds—sometimes to our advantage, sometimes to the reverse. On the credit side of the resulting account we can point to our freedom from the curse of a narrow jealous patriotism, our ready openness to impressions from outside, our cordiality towards alien singers and instrumentalists; on the other side, however, there has been the often strongly marked tendency, that no other country's artistic history has shown, to neglect and depreciate native work in comparison with foreign, even when the latter is only equally good or even worse. This trait was visible at an early stage of our musical career; Morley, for example, in his *Plain and Easy Introduction*, inveighs strongly against the current practice of extolling Italian music to the disadvantage of equally good or better productions by Englishmen. Again, in the Restoration period, there is ample evidence that, at any rate in fashionable circles, French performers

<sup>1</sup> Of course all composers in the history of music, except those of the ultimately worst order, manage to write more or less decent things at times, if only by accident.

<sup>2</sup> So far as hymns are concerned, this process of purification is chiefly due to the High Church section of the Anglican communion; see, for example, the admirable collection, *Songs of Syon*. Very little incentive has been afforded by other religious bodies; but some of the recent larger collections of a general type, such as the revised edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and also the *English Hymnal* (with its exceptionally well-written musical preface), have given considerable impulse to the movement of reform.



and French compositions had a vogue in many cases quite incommensurate with their merits; but the eighteenth century, and the first half (or rather more) of the nineteenth, show this characteristic in its fullest force. The main cause was no doubt the domination of the aristocratic Italian opera; its regular *habitués* felt and expressed a sort of lordly contempt for home products, and a very large number of British performers—chiefly during the last century—considered themselves in honour bound to sink their nationality under Italianized disguises of various kinds.<sup>1</sup> And quite apart from all this, we have only just emerged from a period, some hundred and fifty years long, during which our religious music was almost entirely subservient to the successive influences of three composers of foreign birth. Even if we claim the first of these as to all intents and purposes an Englishman, and the influence exercised by the Handelian oratorio as virtually altogether native, nevertheless the fact remains that it was consciously imposed upon us from outside, and was not in any sense a natural development of any previously existing English art; and the later reigns of Mendelssohn and Gounod (especially the third, happily short though it was) were definitely foreign in character. All three dominations were gravely detrimental in so far as they dictatorially imposed certain methods on all British composers who had any desire for recognition in the field of religious music; we may admire non-British work as much as we like and can, but it should be as learners, not as slaves.

The reaction from all this has resulted at the present time in a movement of considerable strength in the direction of what is somewhat vaguely described as nationalism; but this too has its dangers. We certainly do not want anything like Protection in the field of art; if a non-British

<sup>1</sup> This ridiculous fashion still lingers to some slight extent in the operatic world; but otherwise it is now virtually extinct among the younger generation of performers. There is, however, a well-known young lady pianist who, with a fine up-to-date sense, has adopted a Russian form of her own excellent English surname, but, with charming inconsistency, combines it with her original Christian name, which is as un-Russian as anything can be. The older generation was more thorough-going in its repudiations of its birthright.

is better than a British work, every one worthy to be called the possessor of a musical taste must needs prefer the former. We have, it is true, a definite right to ask that native work shall have fair chances and that it shall not be ousted by inferior competition from outside; there is still room for very considerable improvement of this kind, but to ask more is to abnegate any artistic standpoint worth the name. It is ridiculous and worse to ask English singers to sing home-made productions to the exclusion of Schubert and Brahms<sup>1</sup>; nor should we desire England as a whole to adopt the sort of narrowly parochial attitude which has in Wales and Ireland, for example, gravely injured any sustained artistic production by resident natives. However much a composer's race may be shown in his music, his ideals must be cosmopolitan; all great music speaks a world-language, not a dialect—and this holds good with the really great folk-melodies as much as with any other branch of the art. The ideal of a 'national school of composers' may very easily mean a wilful narrowing of our artistic heritage, a feebly patriotic blunting of the edge of our judgement; and, after all, the musician who (save occasionally when seeking alien texts for his own individual discourses) borrows his material from his native folk-tunes shows himself, just as much as if he borrowed from any other quarter, a common plagiarist who is not strong enough to invent material of his own.

What really do we mean by calling any composer 'English' in tone? We have seen in the last chapter that there are certain broadly general characteristics marking the folk-tunes of the various portions of the British islands; and in the light of these several features we can, if we like, say that Parry is more English than Elgar, or Stanford more Irish than either, or, among past centuries, Purcell more English than Byrd or Arne than Wilbye. But judgements like these connote neither praise nor blame; no composer writes in a

<sup>1</sup> We may note, in passing, how the British anti-patriotism of past generations has resulted in England and America being now the only two countries where singers habitually render foreign music in the original languages—a striking instance of a result of the very greatest artistic value having been produced through the most dubious channels.



chamber hermetically sealed from all external influences, and all that we mean is that some composers have been attracted, more than others have, by the general types of phrase or the general emotional moods exemplified in their native folk-music. A skilled ethnologist might be able to discover the common denominator of, let us say, Tallis and Sullivan, but the attempt is hardly worth making; folk-music, as the production of the more or less 'natural' man, gives the general main characteristics, but in art, as in everything else, nationality is broad enough to include nearly all imaginable varieties. So far as the individual composer is concerned, it is not a matter for either credit or discredit if his temperament leads him to keep close to the norm of his race; the only vital consideration is the value, in the general terms of all races, of his artistic output.

There are no doubt certain subsidiary aspects in which the English musical world of to-day, looked at from other than the composer's point of view, shows features of a unique character. Musical degrees, for example, are unknown abroad<sup>1</sup>; they are first heard of at Oxford and Cambridge towards the end of the fifteenth century, but had little or no bearing on the musical life of the country till past the middle of the nineteenth. Their early history is very obscure<sup>2</sup>; they probably originated out of the custom of granting degrees in the single arts of the mediaeval Trivium and Quadrivium, and may in some respects have been similar to the long extinct degrees in grammar. Until the middle of the nineteenth century their acquisition involved no formal examination of any kind, nothing more indeed than the presentation of an

<sup>1</sup> This general statement holds good at present, but, as regards past history, needs qualifying by one or two very trifling facts; there are three or four cases of musical doctorates having been conferred by German universities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the degree of 'Master in Music' was known in some Spanish universities in the Middle Ages. The usual honorary doctor's degree conferred by foreign universities on distinguished musicians is that of philosophy; just as in England the honorary doctorate of civil law is the possession of all sorts of non-legal persons, including, indeed, several musicians, who are thus doctors twice over.

<sup>2</sup> See Abdy-Williams, *Degrees in Music*. I may, perhaps, also be allowed to refer to my own article on the subject in Grove's Dictionary (second edition) for fuller details than are possible here.

'exercise' under very vague conditions, and the graduates held, as compared with other members of the universities, a position of the most anomalous description—as indeed, at Oxford, they still do at the present time. Most of the younger universities also confer these degrees, and the regulations for their attainment differ widely; in one or two cases a practical test is required, but as a rule the examinations are concerned purely with the theory of music. Honorary degrees are also not infrequently granted; and the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the inheritor of the ancient rights of the occupants of the see as Legates of the Pope, possesses and occasionally exercises the eccentric privilege of conferring them at his own discretion. Musical degrees have no doubt been of service in setting certain standards of scholastic proficiency; though on the other hand the curious passion for ornamental letters that consumes a large section of the British public sometimes leads to foolish misunderstandings of their strictly artistic value.

This love of tangible results in the shape of titles and certificates is indeed, in the field of music, a specially British characteristic: and during the last twenty or thirty years we have increasingly suffered from a tyranny of examinations that at the present day is rampant in every direction. For the higher professional standards such things are no doubt necessary; but it is the special eccentricity of English musicians to travel up and down the country passing and 'plucking' children all day long. In their anxiety for the magic pieces of paper, the parents forget that any teacher worth the name knows infinitely more about his or her pupils than any peripatetic examiner, however patient and fair-minded, can possibly do; and even if we charitably concede to examinations a share of the credit for the great advance in the quality of the music taught in schools during the last generation, nevertheless no impartial observer can do otherwise than keenly regret the stereotyped methods of teaching which most of their syllabuses almost inevitably tend to engender. Inspection is all very well, but musical examinations, as too often carried on to-day, are neither educational nor artistic; and a pitiful amount of time and energy is wasted on them.



In certain respects, indeed, we in England have perhaps been rather specially prone to take an inartistic view of music; a goodhumoured indiscriminating tolerance of irreconcilable contrasts is a peculiarly common attribute, and in art as in other things we have a singular gift for keeping our minds in watertight compartments. Probably no other country could muster such an army of perfectly sincere persons incapable of seeing any reason why they should not admire the C minor symphony and 'The Lost Chord' side by side; the folk-tune and the shop-ballad are alike 'simple music', the greatest performer is he or she who commands the highest fees, and we innocently imagine that the sales of a work of art have some sort of an inherent ratio to its permanent value. Of course we are very far from having a monopoly of vulgar music, but in no other country, perhaps, have prominent composers written such with their eyes open, purely for the sake of money, nor has this kind of thing elsewhere hampered the real progress of the art to anything like so considerable an extent.

Still, there is no sort of reason to be pessimistic about English music. Our leading performers, institutions, writers,<sup>1</sup> can on the whole fully bear comparison with their foreign competitors; and the Londoner has quite exceptional opportunities for hearing every kind of music interpreted by the finest artists of every nationality. And the impartial historian who looks back on our long line of composers, and compares it with what other nations can show, will perhaps—more than either we or they are generally inclined to admit—think it not unworthy of our pride. Two things we have indeed to confess: in the purest and most self-sufficing branch of the art—abstract instrumental music—we have done relatively nothing, and even in vocal work, where our strength has lain, we have never produced a man for whom the term genius seems too small—none of the few supreme kings of the art has been English, either by blood or by residence. But these facts admitted, let us compare our past with that of any other nation. Between Dunstable and the present day there are

<sup>1</sup> Our definitely musical writers, that is to say. Most of our great authors, even when professedly dealing with aesthetics, blunder astoundingly over music, if they ever deign to mention it at all.

nearly five centuries of continuous creative work ; Italy, unless we count the early Netherlandish apostles as Italians, can barely show four centuries, Germany about three and a half, France rather less, Russia seventy years. We have had periods of mere respectability—so has every other race except the German ; and we have had at any rate one period during which the average level of English work was at the least as high as the average level of any other music has been at any period whatsoever. No doubt we have slept the sleep of the dull too often and too long ; but now we are awake again. Nearly seven hundred years ago we gave to the world the first artistic music it had ever seen ; who knows that we may not be its leaders once more ?



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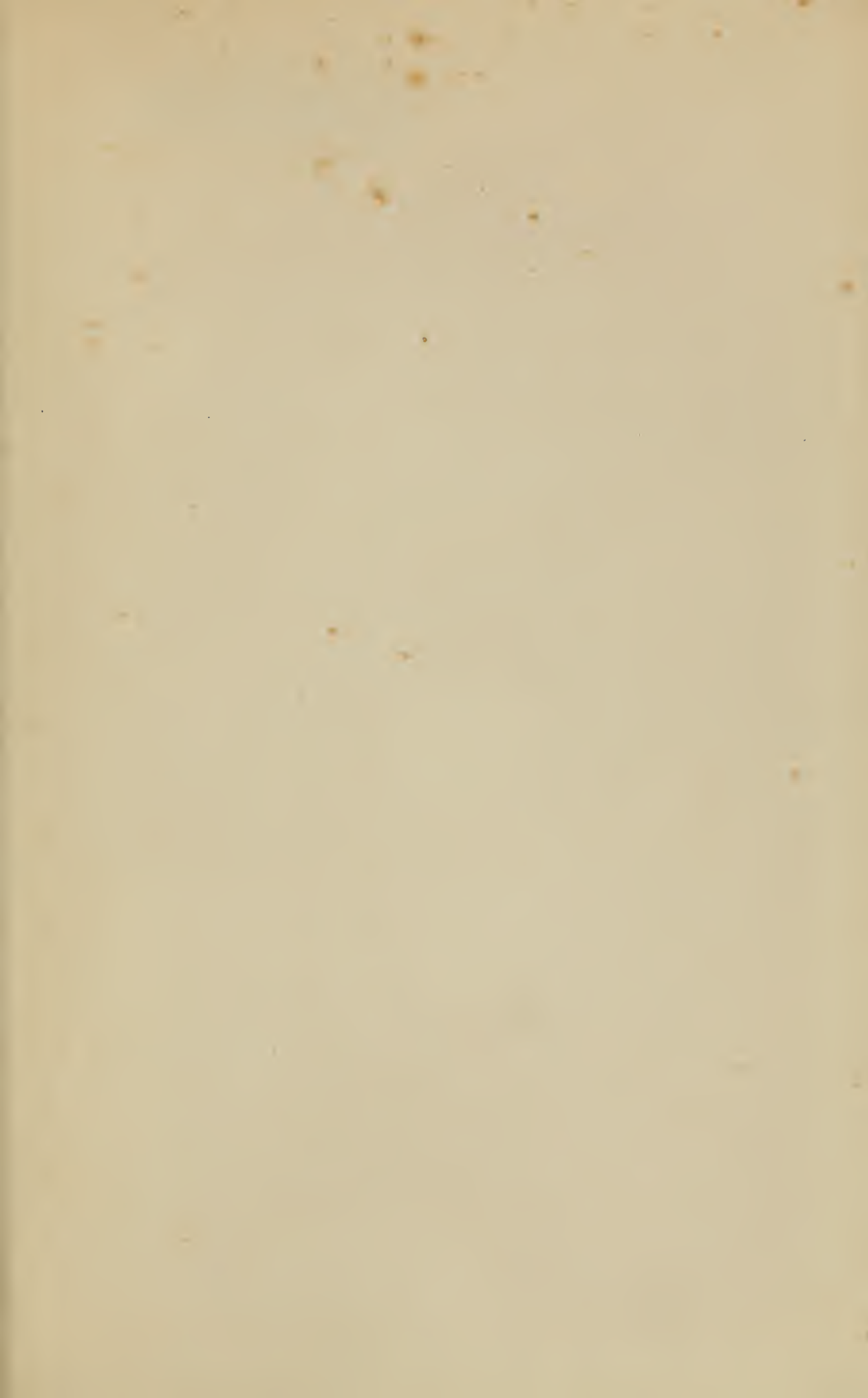


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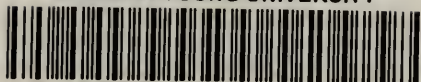
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